

# LIFE AND LETTERS

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# LIFE AND LETTERS

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

(*A Chapter of Autobiography*)

## WAR

And Magnify Thy name, Almighty God!  
But Thy most awful instrument,  
In working out a pure intent,  
Is Man—arrayed for mutual slaughter,  
—Yea, Carnage is Thy daughter!

*From an early version of Wordsworth's Ode, 1816.*

A hundred years mark a difference. We have had some bolder, though no better, Laureates than Wordsworth since 1816, but none bold enough to call Carnage God's daughter. What a pretty little sister for the Prince of Peace!

But never let me fail to do justice to that sturdy realist, the author of the 'Prelude', for, however terrific his metaphor, and however we may shudder in horror at some of the phrases of an ode composed to commemorate the ending of the Napoleonic Wars, are we not now at the moment living under the shadow of an even greater carnage, and still trying our hardest to discover, if we can, 'a moral equivalent for war'?—something a little better than blood and starvation to work out a 'purer intent' than the Treaty of Versailles!

But the nations of the world will not easily, at the

bidding of pious and wealthy men, 'drop their swords and daggers' and be content to remain for generations stiff, stark, and stereotyped within imposed boundaries.

War, as lately waged in the twentieth of the Christian centuries, is so horrible, so abominable, and so terrifying a thing that already most of the far-too-numerous nations of the earth have plumped down on their knees and joined in a General Confession, not, indeed, made in the presence of God, but only in the presence of each other, in which (after the manner of general confessions) they have heaped the harshest language they can command on what used to be regarded as the gallant profession of arms.

'Depend upon it,' once said Dr. Johnson, 'every man who is not a soldier is at heart ashamed of himself!' Now the question seems to be how many men are to be allowed to adopt this trade without their country being ashamed of them.

What other equivalent for Wordsworth's daughter of God can be devised that will do what war undoubtedly has done in the past—namely, hurl into limbo the huge heaps of dry rubbish that accumulate so rapidly in men's minds in times of peace? What do we hear on every side of us to-day?

'The War has created a new atmosphere, a different perspective—things that once sounded almost self-evident are now dismissed as absurdities—difficulties once thought insuperable have mysteriously disappeared. The cataracts of nonsense that deafened our ears in the House of Commons about Ireland (from 1885 to 1918) have ceased to roar.'

If we ask how this has come about, we are told the War did it.

This may seem exaggerated, but that great wars have produced with incredible speed great upheavals in the slow-moving minds of men and women, and have introduced new ways of thinking, and what are called fresh 'points of view', is as certain as that war itself—both in the past, the present, and still more in the future, is, and will be, a sickening crime against humanity. The next war, it is confidently stated, will destroy civilization. But if it is destroyed, it will be by the action of civilized man, and if so, what primarily is meant by civilization? What is not quite so certain as I would like it to be is whether unbroken peace alone, unless accompanied by the much-to-be-desired, but hardly yet-to-be-expected, change in human nature, will be equally effectual in playing the part of scavenger and shooter of dry rubbish as war was able to do in the blood-stained annals of the past.

All this has nothing to do with what I supposed to be the subject of this chapter, viz. the state of mind in Mr. Asquith's Cabinet (of which I was a humble member) in and before 1914.

No occurrence can ever be so disheartening, so entirely disagreeable, so unkind and unfriendly an act, to a Liberal Government (so far, indeed, as it is composed of true Liberals) as the outbreak of a European war within sound of our 'inviolable' shores and our 'territorial' waters.

Distant wars in Asia, China, South Africa, or in that hateful 'wrong horse', the Crimea, which in the fifties of the last century seemed a long way off, were bad enough, and costly enough, and ill-managed enough to excite in Liberal breasts party dissensions, recriminations, harsh criticism of men and measures, and left behind them a lingering sense of shame and, on some tender consciences, of remorse.

## LIFE & LETTERS

But when the members of Mr. Asquith's Cabinet found themselves on the verge of war by land and sea with Germany, a country from whom we had borrowed a race of sovereigns whom we had slowly learned to esteem, a country whose language many of us had striven hard to acquire in the uncomfortable homes of Lutheran pastors, and whose great example a quite recent set of highly respected teachers and critics had bidden us almost slavishly to admire—why then, to cut this long sentence short, this was a very different kettle of fish.

The Boer War, which had divided the Liberal party in twain (though we were assured in the Lobby of the House of Commons it would be over in a month), was a bagatelle by the side of a war with Germany.

The great body of Liberal electors who had returned a Liberal Government to office, were so far from being jingoes that many of them, and those amongst the best, were pacifists at heart, and had come to believe that a really big war with fellow Christians was a game better left to our neighbours, and a sport that we Britons could only look on with horror, much comforted by daily preachments in the *Times*, and not without (in certain wealthy quarters) that measure of composure that is bred by the old-fashioned assurance that so long as we remained neutrals, and held out for the rights of neutrals, there was much money to be made out of other people's unhappy disputes.

The English are a nation of lawyers, and English lawyers have always been great sticklers for the rights of neutrals to carry on business 'as usual', but the late War has played 'Old Nick' with these rights to feed the enemy (save when prevented by an effective blockade), for even neutral countries were only allowed to buy as

## WAR

much food as they could prove was required for the sustenance of their own people, lest they should resell the surplus to the enemy.

In truth, modern warfare not only repeals the Decalogue, but Puffendorf and Grotius as well, not to mention that excellent modern treatise on International Law by the late Mr. Hall, a volume that once used to be well thumbed in our Foreign Office. It is now generally recognized that in future wars there will be no room for neutrals, or for that convenient distinction between combatants and non-combatants; and if this is indeed so, the case for the League of Nations is greatly strengthened.

Those noble institutions, the British Foreign Office and War Office, had long lain outside the purview of the ordinary Liberal or Radical. Officers of the regular Army and even the well-dressed clerks in the Foreign Office were seldom seen at the meals of the middle classes. It was a rare thing for a Liberal to be what is now called 'a good European'. An occasional Garibaldi, or even a revolutionary Mazzini or a Russian Stepniak, might excite in certain households an exotic interest. A free Italy, a liberated Greece, a handcuffed Turkey, a Russia without its Grand Dukes, were about as far as the ordinary Liberal voter was prepared to go, and then only when excited. The general details of foreign policy, never more than half revealed and often completely concealed, were left alone by the recently enfranchised populace as being, for the most part, like the Schleswig-Holstein question, or the origin of evil, beyond mere human comprehension.

This did not mean that good Liberals and Radicals believed for a single moment in the superior knowledge or foresight (nowadays called *vision*) of either Whig or

Tory Foreign Secretaries, or of our ambassadors and diplomatic agents abroad. John Bright's stinging epigram about our Diplomatic Service being a system of out-door relief for the junior members of the aristocracy enjoyed, at one time, a large circulation.

All that this indifference meant was that until the dogs of war were let slip, English foreign policy, beyond a few platitudes about the balance of power and a strong Navy on blue water, was almost unknown and seldom discussed in public places. My old acquaintance, Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff was, I know, considered a good bit of a bore in the Elgin Burghs. This may not have been the case during the eighteenth century, in the age of those coffee-house politicians who bustle so agreeably through the pages of Steele, Addison and Johnson, but it was so in recent years.

It was only after we had stumbled into war, and usually after it was all over, save for the taxation it involved, that the mischievous energies of such men as Mr. Layard and Lord Stratford de Redcliffe were made plain to a disgusted minority.

It must not be inferred from this that a Tory administration, having behind it a majority of voters more or less of their way of thinking about war, was likely to be better fitted than a Liberal Government to conduct one to a successful issue. History, as we now at last can read it, warrants no such inference. Yet the opinion may be hazarded that a Tory administration and the electorate behind it are never quite so averse to the very idea of war as was the Liberal Government of 1914.

Here again I am indulging in general reflections of no value in these *post bellum* days. Which of the combatants in the late War would have kept it going so long had they

even partially glimpsed its consequences? They would have patched up their differences long before the occupation of the Ruhr.

But wisdom after the event, though better than folly before it, is not the kind of wisdom that is well calculated to inspire confidence in any perturbed breast troubled about the future.

Whilst considering the state of mind of the Liberal Cabinet on this question of war, a distinction must be struck between their feelings during the months before it broke out and after it had done so.

When once a big war has begun, the responsibility of a Cabinet (considered as a conglomeration) as to its daily conduct is over. It was hardly necessary for Dr. Newman during the Crimean War to take up his burnished pen and indite eight letters to a newspaper (in one of which occurs the phrase 'England is surely the paradise of little men and the purgatory of great ones') to point out, under the title: 'Who is to blame?', how unfitted a large Cabinet is to conduct a war—for no British Cabinet has ever (in recent years, at all events) attempted to do anything quite so foolish as that. So far as Mr. Asquith's Cabinet was concerned, only those ministers who were members of the Committee of Defence had anything to do with the actual conduct of the War. How *much all*, or any of them, had to do with it is another matter best known to themselves, but no one who was not a member of this committee had *anything* to do with it. This committee was very properly appointed by the Prime Minister, and the selection of it was his business.

A Cabinet Minister not on this committee thus had no direct responsibility in this matter of conduct, nor was he regularly supplied with the papers and maps which,

perhaps, might have enabled him to form and express in the Cabinet any opinion of the least value.

On isolated points affecting the department he controlled, a minister not on this committee was occasionally consulted, but that was the beginning and the end of his direct personal responsibility.

What, then, was the responsibility of the Cabinet for the pre-war policy of the Foreign Office? A very grave responsibility it was, and one from which it would not be easy for any minister to escape, even if he wished to do so, before any tribunal, here or hereafter.

A Foreign Secretary fit for his job is almost of necessity a 'shy bird', even when surrounded by that 'band of brothers' of which, we are so often assured until they break up, all Cabinets are composed—and in critical days he is apt to be a very shy bird indeed. So long as a Foreign Secretary keeps his Prime Minister well posted up in the tendentious direction of the numberless interviews and private conversations he has with Foreign Ministers, he has probably done all he feels it his duty to do. (See Mr. Gladstone's carefully worded opinion on this point. *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, Vol. II, p. 270.)

It would be unreasonable, and perhaps impossible, to expect a Foreign Secretary to come down once, or twice, a week to a Cabinet Council and read aloud the notes he may have taken of these conversations, or to state from memory their precise effect either on his own mind or, what would be more difficult, on that of the man he was conversing with.

Anything entrusted to a Cabinet as a secret will be kept, but day-by-day conversations, particularly in early stages, are not exactly State secrets, and a cautious man will be chary as to what he says in a company of, say,



twenty men, some of whom may have contracted what is called the 'press habit'.

It has always been the tradition, wise or foolish, of the Foreign Office to hold itself aloof from publicity, and to move in a 'mysterious way'.

No more straightforward man than Lord Grey of Fallodon has ever held the seals of the Foreign Office, or one more averse to war, or more bent upon preserving the public peace, not only for his own country, but for the world. Whether he was a 'good European', I should require to know a little better than I do what precisely a good European is before answering my own question. Perhaps he was not one, but a more honest and impressive minister to hold personal communications with the representatives of foreign, and perhaps justly suspicious, nations, cannot be imagined. To replace him would have been impossible.

Anyhow, these communications went on day by day, and that the Cabinet was told as a body, whenever anything had been concluded, by way of bargain or complete understanding, with either France or Germany, we may take for certain, for has not Lord Grey told us it was so?

Yet none the less it was impossible for any minister, other than the Prime Minister, to feel certain at any given moment of time that he was acquainted with the position, as it may have been understood by, let us say, the French Ambassador.

This uncertainty, which all of us could perceive for ourselves without being wizards, gave rise to much uneasiness in Cabinet conversations and more frequently in private confabulations.

It was more than hinted that as we were apparently being committed day by day, or at least half committed,

to a hypothetical alliance with France, would it not be more likely to secure peace were France told quite plainly that it was more than doubtful whether, in any of the circumstances then thought probable, England would ever be willing to declare war on Germany; and on the other hand, why not tell Germany straight out that if she declared war against France with obvious intent to crush her, it was impossible to believe that England would not sooner or later (whatever justification Germany had for fighting) come to the aid of her next-door neighbour.

All these hints had, to my mind, an amateurish sound. Grey was not Jove wielding Heaven's thunderbolts. Unless his country were going to be behind him, how could he take it upon himself to threaten France with neutrality or to bluff Germany with war? What would have been thought, if it came out before a shot had been fired, or Belgium invaded, that Germany had been told that if in any circumstances she entered France with her armies ours would take the field against her?

Remembering, as we now can, how easy it proved to be, after the events had happened, to make a war with Germany popular to the pitch of hideous savagery, we forget how divided opinion was in those pre-War days, or at any rate was so reported to be by prominent Cabinet Ministers. We were told in the Cabinet that the North of England, the City of London, etc., were all aghast at the bare idea of a European war with England as a combatant, and not as a money-making neutral!

My own view from the first had been that it was the duty of the Cabinet to do all that lay within its power, not merely to keep Great Britain and Ireland out of any war, but to prevent any war at all.

## WAR

In 1870 I was a Cambridge undergraduate and though, like most people even of maturer years, exceedingly ill-informed on the merits or demerits of the dispute between France and Germany, I was all aglow on the side of France, and shed (metaphorically) bitter tears over her humiliation—and the thought that perhaps I was doomed twice in a life-time to see Paris in possession of the Germans, after another series of Moltke massacres in the fair fields of France, was repulsive to me.

On the other hand, increasing years had warned me that it was idle to lay down hard-and-fast rules between wars of sheer aggression and those waged in self-defence.

It is only the wearer who knows where the shoe pinches, and it is the heart alone that knows its own bitterness; and I had been told by one who knew him well how frequently Bismarck, that unscrupulous yet peace-loving statesman, would wake in the middle of the night sweating with fear at a nightmare of the sudden mobilization of the armies of Russia and France against the Fatherland.

Did not Kruger begin the Boer War? The fact is, it is often impossible to determine war guilt.

Our objective ought to be to keep the peace in Europe, and that undoubtedly was Grey's object. He had none of the instincts of a filibuster, nor did he feel within his self-centred frame any of the pulses of an imaginary great commander on stricken fields. His policy may have had its weak points, and might have left us exposed to bitter misunderstandings, but what other alternative policy was ever put before him?

Personally, I never attached much importance to the promise made by Germany that if we maintained neutrality she would leave unravaged the northern

coasts of France. John Burns, a man who was far better acquainted with the common soldiers of the Army and the non-commissioned officers than all the rest of the Cabinet put together, resigned on this point, thinking we had no right to lay down any such terms.

For my part I felt convinced that if, and whenever the real pressure was felt and the pinch came, this promise would be disregarded, and we should be forced to come in.

I would much sooner trust an honest bruiser like Mr. Tunney to undertake, when arranging a 'mill' for £100,000 with another champion of the ring, to go on fighting with his left hand kept resolutely behind his back, however hard-pressed he might chance to be, than I would have trusted the War Lords of Germany to forgo the privileges of a complete victory. Excuses for this could easily be found, and, like all excuses, some people would believe in them and others would not.

Nor could I blame Grey for refusing beforehand to promise neutrality in exchange for a promise from Germany to refrain from breaking the public law of Europe and to observe the neutrality of Belgium. Compounding felonies can never be a duty.

In October 1928, Mr. Guy Morley published, as evidently it was the intention of his uncle that it should some day be published, *Lord Morley's Memorandum of Resignation in 1914* (Macmillan & Co.). It is a characteristic and engaging document, and if some of its passages cannot be read without a smile, it is with one of those smiles that are perfectly consistent with a lasting and deep-rooted affection. I read it with some surprise from a purely personal point of view.

I should have to re-arrange all my notions of friend-

ship between man and man were I not able to rest persuaded that as real and intimate an affection existed between John Morley and myself as ever could be the case between two men, one fourteen years younger than the other. I had come to know him a year or two before I got into Parliament, and afterwards, whilst he was writing his life of Gladstone, living as I did almost at his door in Chelsea, I frequently, upon his invitation, visited him whilst thus occupied, and always did one or two small things he asked me to do for him. How often have I dined with him in his houses or clubs! Sometimes in jovial company and as often alone. His range of subjects was great and my curiosity was eager. He sent me all his books and I replied with booklets. I have scores of his letters, some of them couched in such adulatory terms that even after deducting ninety per cent on account of the profuse generosity of his nature to those he liked, the balance would be enough to

Make a door-plate blush for shame  
If door-plates were not so brazen.

(For door-plates, read *Small Authors*.)

After Cabinets I have walked to the India Office with him many times and always in deep conversation. And yet I cannot once remember that on this vital question of our pre-War policy he ever addressed a word to me 'for my soul's benefit', and this was all the more surprising because he was never indisposed to sermonize me after a most seductive fashion.

I knew from his bearing in the Cabinet that he was profoundly dissatisfied with Grey's policy, but then I was by no means enamoured of it myself, yet ready to defend it on the grounds already expressed.

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It would be humiliating to suppose that he did not think my opinion on such a point worth having, and as I decline to entertain this solution, I am left not a little puzzled.

When the fateful decision had to be made I was not troubled with any doubt as to the course to be taken.

Morley, in his Memorandum, lays great stress, as he was entitled to do, on the hypothetical arrangements made with France long previous to the invasion of Belgium, but he too much belittles the inevitable effects of that breach of the public Law of Europe on the minds of the ordinary inhabitants of this country. To refuse arbitration, and to begin a great war by a breach of faith was not only a crime but a blunder of gigantic proportions, and revealed on the part of those, whoever they were, who thus began it stupendous ignorance of the mentality of Englishmen. Can it fairly be said that we were wrong in the rage that an act, so significant of the temper of the German War Lords and of the fierceness of their determination at all costs to lay France low, raised in our breasts?

It may be true that this breach of faith was not the *causa causans* of the War, but it was a *causa* powerful enough to make our entry into it inevitable. How could we treat diplomatically what was already a *fait accompli*?

Until this breach of faith, Harcourt, a man for whom I had a great regard, was one of the most active of the members of the Cabinet in pressing upon them the horror with which the possibility of our being at war with Germany was regarded in the North of England, the City of London, and other representative places and quarters, and he asked me to attend a meeting referred to by Morley in his Memorandum. I refused to do so, and if

the meeting which Morley himself (apparently almost accidentally) attended was as he describes it, I am glad I was not there, for, so we are told, 'It was in truth a very shallow affair'. Nobody, either Morley or anybody else, brought home to it the real gravity of the situation—'I saw no standard-bearer'.

It would appear as if the fate of Home Rule for Ireland, if war broke out, lay like a heavy weight on Morley's mind, paralysing his activities. He thought that war would impair the chances of Ireland, whereas it did the very reverse. *O caeca pectora!* to use a quotation I have often heard on the lips of my beloved friend.

After the War had once begun I had no direct concern with its conduct, save so far as its repercussions affected Ireland. There was no real talk about conscription for Ireland in my time.

No war in modern times has produced so abundant, so realistic and so well-composed a literature as the late War. There were real men of letters in the trenches, French, German and English; and books have been written about it which, though cheaper to-day, are even more illuminative than the more costly productions of politicians.

ARNOLD BENNETT

## FROM A FRENCH JOURNAL

### NOTE

At this period, 1907, though I had not begun to write *The Old Wives' Tale*, nor even to construct the book in detail, the story lay in wait for me within my mind and was continually reminding me of its presence there. At night in your bunk in a rolling yacht you can hear at intervals a mysterious swishing noise—the restless, sometimes violent movement of the fresh water and the fuel-oil in the tanks beneath the floor. The idea of *The Old Wives' Tale* moved within me, beneath everything else, in the manner of those liquids. I had shut up my Paris flat and was living in several rooms in a small house in Les Sablons, a village on the high road between Moret and Fontainebleau, a mile or so up the hill from Moret and half a mile from the edge of the Forest of Fontainebleau. Moret is one of the most painted towns in France, but I went into it seldom, because of its exasperating picturesqueness and because it was beset by charming youthful painters, earnest but apparently without talent, who would persist in painting the river, the bridge and the church, and whose notions about painting made up in violence what they lacked in breadth. Sisley's daughter still lived in the neighbourhood; Sisley had painted the neighbourhood once for all. However, the younger generation, quite rightly, were not to be intimidated by the legend of Sisley or the presence of his offspring.

Les Sablons is not picturesque. Only one artist inhabited it, and he an amateur—myself. Les Sablons was too



prosperous to be picturesque. The marriage of the grocer's daughter was perhaps the most magnificent spectacle of the kind I ever saw: the festivities lasted for three days and two nights. The house, of which I rented the upper floor, belonged to a Monsieur Lebert, who for forty years had been a porter on the Paris, Lyons, Méditerranée Railway, and was now honourably retired. He was a great gardener and affronted heaven by his anti-Christian free-thinking. Never in the Five Towns have I known a Wesleyan Methodist more narrow-minded than this delightful and kindly atheist. Scepticism was his hobby. He loved to go into the churches with his hat on. When vergers drew his attention to the hat, he would reply: 'I have a bad cold', and would triumphantly keep the hat where it was. He was incapable of seeing, or I was incapable of making him see, that this trick was unworthy of the splendid traditions of irreligious nonconformity. The sole point for him was that he had succeeded in wearing his hat in all the sacred edifices of the district. As some men in need of diversion go to the golf-links or the public-house, so would he go out to perambulate churches with his hat on. He and his wife (who ruled him in many things, but dutifully adopted his uncompromising atheism) gave me lots of precious and even unique information for my novel, about Paris in the 'sixties and 'seventies.

\*     \*     \*     \*     \*

*19th July 1907. Les Sablons*

I noticed only yesterday that the mark of the aged female peasant in Les Sablons is a cap, which is drawn very tightly indeed over the head. It is apparently formed out of a cotton handkerchief, for the ends of a bow are to

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be seen at the top-back of the head, and also below. These aged creatures are almost without exception deformed, chiefly by vast deposits of fat. They wear very short skirts (always some shade of blue, much washed out), and, like the majority of peasant-women of no matter what age in the district, they have exceedingly unpleasant voices. But a really extraordinary specimen of the sex passed along the high-road last night while we were dining at the inn. She was an old woman harnessed to a cart containing merchandize whose nature I could not distinguish. On either side of her was harnessed a dog about as big as a pointer. An old man stalked majestically behind, at a distance of several yards, carrying a very long staff and uttering at regular intervals a mournful cry concerning his wares. The old woman was, in the accepted phrase, 'little more than a brute', and there was no doubt about it, no concealment of it. They did not belong to the district. Probably they toured thus through a whole department or several departments, and, as Madame Nantais suggested, might well be in easy circumstances.

I knew that Sophie, the second heroine of *The Old Wives' Tale*, was going to live in France and be almost French, and I felt a tremendous naughty temptation to make the daughter of the most respectable Bursley draper sink in the world and end her days as the companion of dogs in front of a cart. Why not? What an outcry in the literary columns of the British press! What foamings at the mouth of outraged critics! And how it would somehow serve them right and do them good! However, I successfully fought and slew the temptation. Only authors know the dazzling temptations of authorship.

Madame Nantais would have it that though the fat-

## FROM A FRENCH JOURNAL

ness of women was not due to over-alimentation, the fatness of the men was. But she said that in various parts of France, such as Normandy and in the South round about Toulouse, there used to be, and probably there were still, men who prided themselves on enormous powers of eating. On occasion, when challenged to it, they would perform terrible feats, such as consuming a whole turkey. Then they were very ill indeed. The remedy was to dig a big hole in the muck-heap and pack them, naked, tightly into it, up to the neck. The amateur doctors who did this cure did it with gusto: they loved doing it, telling the sufferer all the time what an odious glutton he was. The heat generated by the manure promoted digestion in a manner almost miraculous, and the next day the sufferer was perfectly cured. Another sublime scene for a novel, but not for an English novel.

20th July 1907

Last night there was a repercussion on me of the *Lever v. Associated Press* libel case. After all, even in the most plutocratic, Gargantuan, ruthless, steam-rollerish and damn-you-all newspaper organization such as the *Harmsworthian*, an adverse verdict of £50,000 must cause some friction between employer and employed, with moral suffering for both parties. The spectacle of Lord Northcliffe raging around in the 'impotent fury' of one of the foiled baronets of his own serials, and insulting all his staff from top to bottom—this spectacle is human, touching: it has the austere beauty of tragedy. In my series of articles, now running in the *Evening News*, about buying a library there are two articles praising and also blaming, in detail and with considerable candour, various cheap reprints. The first of these two was used

without any comment. Next day came the Lever verdict against the *Daily Mail* and the *Evening News*, and then I received a very apologetic and courteous letter from the literary editor of the *Evening News* giving every reason except the right one why the second article should be shortened and 'modified'. Said the literary editor to me: 'It is almost impossible for one who is outside a newspaper office at the moment to judge the relative position of affairs'. Not at all impossible! I judged 'the relative position of affairs' perfectly, and wrote at once giving the martyred literary editor permission to do what he liked with whatever might be libellous in my article. But I did not phrase it like that. . . . I had a notion of writing a play about Northcliffe, whom of course I greatly admire as Leviathan, though I never set eyes on him save occasionally at lunch at the Temple Restaurant. . . . Yesterday and the day before I walked in the forest and by the Seine and constructed the first three acts (four scenes) of the play which I am taking from *Anna of the Five Towns* for the Stage Society. I have done no stage-writing for a long time; but the trick of it came back to me almost immediately; it seems to me now to be largely a trick. . . . Last night also I received a number of *Il Romanzo Mensile* from Milan, containing the whole of an Italian translation of *Hugo* and a section of an Italian translation of *The Loot of Cities*. In fact, I occupied the entire number, save for a short story by Dostoevsky. This much flattered me, especially as there were two women present able and willing to be impressed. In the little room on the edge of the forest I became suddenly a European figure. I was glad to find that I could make out a good deal of the translation, though not so easily as the novel by d'Annunzio which I read daily before breakfast.

22nd July 1907

On Saturday morning I walked for two hours in the forest and finished the construction of the *Five Towns* play. A great deer crashed fiercely through thick bushes like a stag out of Sir Walter Scott, stood staring at me for some time and then crashed and crackled off again. Then when I sat down to rest on a felled tree a squirrel appeared and stood staring at me quite in the manner of the deer. It bounded to within a few yards of me and then sprang up a tree, hung to the bark like a fly for several seconds, ran still higher up the perpendicular with extreme rapidity, at the same time curving round to the side of the trunk opposite to me. It was gone. Not a large tree, nor had it many branches nor much foliage. I walked round and round the tree and searched most carefully, but I could not discover the squirrel. Vague thoughts of studying natural history. Cynical smile at this beautiful dream of improving myself.

In pursuance of my new scheme for making Sunday a holiday, I did not work yesterday. I read the greater portion of Jeanne Marni's *Pierre Tisserand*—to please Madame Nantais. Some of the dialogue in it is admirable; but all these novels of sexual sentimentality are altogether too narrow in outlook. They lack nobility; they do not arouse a single fine emotion. This is just what there has got to be in *The Old Wives' Tale*—nobility. I think I had it now and then in *Whom God Hath Joined*, but in the next book I must immensely increase the dose. . . . During the last day or two we have decided that we prefer living in the country. A small château, in this district if possible, where there is forest and river and heaps of other assorted scenery! A small yacht on the Seine. No Paris flat. The change to occur in about two

## LIFE & LETTERS

years' time when my lease of No. 3 rue d'Aumale would expire. But before dinner we went for a walk to St. Mammès, at the confluence of the Seine and the Loing. The water was busy with great barges. And I had suddenly a great idea of possessing a barge as big as these barges, fitted up luxuriously as a house-boat and with a small motor. A complete moving home in summer; we could go all over France in it, all over Europe in fact. We should keep the Paris flat, and I could conscientiously abandon my deep-seated ambition for a sea-going yacht. This scheme took hold of me so strongly that I could think of nothing else and became quite moody.

My youngest sister and her husband had pointed out to me the dreadful fact that I had absolutely no hobby, no diversion. I had played no game for years. I collected nothing, seriously. I *did* nothing, except work. It was a genuine fact, which had most strangely escaped my attention. They told me that I ought to have a hobby. And I saw that to make my life conform to the everlasting principles of common sense I indeed must have a hobby. Their arguments were unanswerable. So I sought for a hobby, and at last hit on fine calligraphy and the illumination thereof in colours. Thus it was that I became interested in calligraphy. I have never done anything except at the suggestion of my friends. They told me to write a novel, and I wrote one. They told me to write a play, and I wrote one. (Stay! I bought my first yacht entirely on my own initiative, and in defiance of advice; but that was ages earlier, before I had fully appreciated the wisdom of friends and relatives.)

Last night I received a note from Henry Davray saying that my French piece, *Que Faire?*, which he has trans-

lated, would probably be played in Paris during the winter, and asking me if I could supply a *pièce gaie*!

The play is a tragedy of French life in two acts. I haven't looked at it from the day I wrote it to this, but I thought rather well of it. So did Davray. It was written for the French public, so that I was not hampered by any English notions of what ought and what ought not to be put on the stage. Also, there is no stage censorship in France, except that of the police. The plot turned on a case of incest. The only point in the play to which my French friends objected was this—the heroine was a music-hall artiste, and I had kept her a virgin till the action began. They said this was ridiculous and quite impossible, and that the public would scoff thereat. However, I maintained her a virgin and they yielded.

[Unnecessary to say that the play never was produced. Plays seldom are produced. At that period I had two plays sold for production in London, and two others in a fair way to be sold. None of the four achieved production. At the invitation of the Stage Society I had begun to make a play out of *Anna of the Five Towns*. This was practically assured of production, and was in fact duly produced according to promise by the adventurous Stage Society. A day or two after its production the adventurous Mr. Justice Darling (now Lord Darling) referred to it from the Bench, and I began to surmise proudly that I was on the map. The somewhat *ad captandum* title, *Cupid and Commonsense*, to which the Stage Society rightly objected and which I rightly insisted on retaining, had captured his attention.]

23rd July 1907

Yesterday I began to perceive that my hobby of fine

earnest efforts. I have suffered from this cause and know how much it injured me. What have I not let fall into the well! If I had written all that I well might, a hundred volumes would not contain it. The Present will have its rights; the thoughts and feelings which daily press upon the poet will and should be expressed. But, if you have a great work in your head, nothing else thrives near it, all other thoughts are repelled, and the pleasantness of life itself is lost . . . If you have erred as to the whole, all your toil is lost . . . Thus for all his toil and sacrifice the poet gets, instead of reward and pleasure, nothing but discomfort and a paralysis of his powers. But if he daily seizes the present, and always treats with a freshness of feeling what is offered to him, he always makes sure of something good, and if he does not sometimes succeed has at least lost nothing. . . . The world is so great and rich, and life is so full of variety, that you can never want occasions for poems. But they must all be occasional poems; that is to say, reality must give both impulse and material for their production. A particular case becomes both universal and poetic by the very circumstance that it is treated by a poet. All my poems are occasional poems suggested by real life, and having therein a firm foundation I attach no importance to poems snatched out of the air. . . .'

Very true. But what dreadful bosh! The babble of a dilettante, who could never sacrifice women to work. That was why they adored him. Not the sort of stuff meet to be read by someone who is fecundating an epic, as I am! He is right. There were chapters in *Leonora* and *Whom God Hath Joined* that laid a waste all around me and in addition nearly blew the top off my head. Look at the last page of *Anna of the Five Towns*. It is nothing,



now. Yet if it had lasted five minutes longer it would have sent me into a lunatic asylum. It was the only piece that ever, since I became a professional writer, forced me to work on it after dinner. And these were all trifles compared with what *The Old Wives' Tale* will have to be!

26th July 1907

Madame Y is the greatest bore that ever lived, except one of my aunts. Nobody ever comes away from a visit to that unfortunate woman without a really serious, oppressive sense of boredom. She is so insincere; she is such a *poseuse*; she is such a liar, not about facts, but about feelings. She speaks in clichés all the time. Like everyone who speaks always in clichés, she is incapable of looking the facts in the face—only now and then she loses her head and makes a scene, in which her whole system of pretences is smashed to bits. You would think that her system of pretences could never be put together again. But it can. In an hour or two it is perfect once more: you can't detect the slightest crack in it anywhere. Nevertheless, there is something admirable in Madame Y. She is handsome, she has produced beautiful children; she has taste in dress; she speaks English; she is a tremendous worker and has successfully carried through at least one considerable commercial enterprise. Emphatically she is a trier. Also she is a massive pillar of respectability, and respectability is a necessary of civilized society. My God! How she bores me! But there is a soul somewhere within her corsage. It has peeped out and timidly shown itself to me. She is the French counterpart of my Aunt Y, who is going to be one of the important secondary characters in *The Old Wives' Tale*, and whom I could pleasurably put into all the novels I shall ever write. Madame Y and

my Aunt Y are Balzacian. For fiction purposes they do not need to be enhanced, but rather to be reduced, diminished, weakened. They would be incredible if rendered in their full strength. They have grandeur, and I can do them all right. I am simply burning to do them. When I have done them they will be remembered. . .

Shopping in Moret yesterday I went into the English bootmaker's. He is known as the English bootmaker. A thin man. I asked him if he was English, and he said he was, and at once began to talk English. But it was a foreigner's English. He has a curious accent (half French, half cockney), and he *will* put the adverb immediately after the verb in the French way ('He spoke very easily English', instead of 'English very easily'); and do even worse things with the language. He said that he went to London nearly every year. 'What part of London?' 'Kilburn, near to Westminster.' He has lived in various French towns and also ten years in Stuttgart, where he learned his trade. He is a successful breeder of fox-terriers. He has the usual good characteristics of a cobbler. In his dark shop he must have given much thought to things in general. You might try till Doomsday to imagine, or to invent, the psychology of a man like that, and you couldn't do it. You would have to study him for months in order to set him down convincingly, and even then you would probably make a mess of him. But some people—you just see them, hear them say about ten words, and the total impression is clear and complete, instantly. You do not have to make further inquiries about them. You can bring them into a story and you know without any research how they will behave in any conceivable circumstances.

*(To be continued)*

GEORGE SANTAYANA

## A FEW REMARKS

## ON CRIME

In clinging to our vices we often sincerely regret them, or half regret them. A vice is like a stammer or a wart: the lifelong habit may have been grafted upon us by some early accident, and may be a nervous parasite quite peripheral and odious to ourselves; the victim of it is not pleased with himself for biting his nails or getting drunk or running after loose women. He would much rather that the fiend should let him alone and allow him to satisfy himself more gloriously. Not so with a crime. A crime is too much ours to be regretted. It was wrung from us once only, at the moment when we were most deeply ourselves and most intensely alive. Murderous as it may be, and destructive of what is dearest to others or even to ourselves, every crime has its internal virtue; we hide it jealously, with a terror which is half love; or if it is discovered and we are obliged to confess it, we do so with a certain glow of defiant pride. Some god, we feel, required and prompted it at that hour, in contempt of all mortal prudence; and if the world blasphemes against that irresponsible god, it is because the world is dead, and cannot understand life.

The internal morality of crime appears clearly when the criminal is not a single individual, but a band or a sect or a nation. Within that society, the most intrepid criminal is the most virtuous man. And he may really be an estimable person, sweet and mild in his domestic capacity, and heroic in the fray; the frontiers at which

the crime begins may be so remote and the victim so foreign, that no self-reproach reverberates from them to the heart. Necessity and the blindness of war then turn ruthlessness into innocence.

In fact, the first and fundamental crime is to exist at all, existence being an inveterate cannibal, or worse, since it always feeds on some part of its own body. Vegetarians excuse themselves by ostentatiously not eating their own children, or other animals, and calling whatever they devour inanimate. But is anything inanimate? At least, nothing can be formless; and in destroying the forms of things in the hope of preserving our own form, we commit an act of which the violence is certain and the success impossible. Yet we cannot abolish aggression: that would be to abolish the flush of youth, and to decree a general suicide in order to prevent an occasional murder. The only solution, since conflict must rage for ever, is to carry it on with as much chivalry as possible, suffering reason to moderate somewhat the love of life: to teach existence, since it must perish, to perish gracefully, and by a timely connivance to bring the will of the dying into harmony with that of their heirs. In saying this, I am far from wishing to emulate that ancient sage who was called the advocate of death, and whose eloquence drove those Greek young men and women, rapt in a divine despair, to cast themselves into the sea. The flux is in no haste to swallow us; it leaves room for many a feast; Nature is full of sustained repetitions, and it is as legitimate and feasible for us to cling to a pleasant custom as to push for some dire reform. But slowly and imperceptibly the Pyramids change their colour; we must die daily; and it is this gentle renovation of our being, no less than its catastrophes, major and

minor, that wisdom might learn to greet with a smile: for there is much humour in it. Time laughs at ambition, and Eternity laughs at Time; and if we could relish this double irony, the great crime of existence, self-destruction would cease to seem an outrage, and the violence of it would become like a lover's violence, tragic but welcome.

### ON PRUDENCE

Why should a youth suppress his budding passions in favour of the sordid interests of his own withered old age? Why is that problematical old man who may bear his name fifty years hence nearer to him now than any other imaginary creature? The soul is not directed upon herself; more important than her temporal continuity is her reproduction, and more important than her material reproduction are her spiritual affinities, by which parity is established between the kindred exploits and the conspiring thoughts of the most remote persons. If it be frivolous to live in the present, is it not vain to live for the future? And how many are concentrated and contemplative enough to live in the eternal?

### ON MONEY

Money, as the modern rich man disposes of it, is not wealth of a natural sort. Natural wealth would consist of visible objects in a man's possession, which the curious and admiring eye might catch glimpses of in his hand or in his shop or behind his park gates. The proprietor of these fine things has a natural dignity: not only the dignity which long and familiar use of them may have given to his mind and manners, but at least the dignity of power, because having found, made, inherited, or

conquered these choice portions of the material world, he can share or withhold them at will, and thereby establishes a natural domination over other people, in proportion to their need or ambition. But the modern rich man is not the obvious lord of anything. His mysterious wealth is homeless, nominal, immaterial: it consists of the force of words written upon paper. We live in a fog of finance. The capitalist hardly knows what goods or works or rights or projects his bonds and shares represent: his function is merely to sign cheques and to receive other paper, and on distributing this, to be fed and clothed magnificently as if by magic. Very likely he lives in a flat and travels about restlessly in a motor; he belongs everywhere and nowhere; he knows everybody, and nobody knows who on earth he is. As he buys or sells his title to some fraction of the unknown, he may well wonder what makes him daily so much richer or poorer, and perhaps lays the whole world of buyable things and persons at his feet. The domination of money is a sort of conventional miraculous domination, like the former domination of religion. How can it subsist?

I reply: by imputation to the rich man of control over some natural increase in the world, due to the general fecundity of Nature, or to that part of it which passes through the hands and the brains of men. The fecundity of Nature may be watched, guarded, or coaxed by a knowing mind: its products may be collected, transported, and exchanged, perhaps on a grand scale; and those who manipulate these operations, perhaps by telegraph from the other end of the earth, possess the power over these things without possessing the things themselves: they possess their value. Being liquidated and merged in the universal mechanism of exchange, this

value at the rich man's disposal becomes a mathematical and fantastic quantity: it becomes money. To-morrow this convention may break down and all this nominal wealth may vanish like a dream. The strong, no doubt, will always seize and hold the good things of this world; but it may be again by an actual mastery and possession of them, and not by an artifice of book-keeping.

### ON SELF-SACRIFICE

Self-sacrifice passes for a wonderful virtue, as if human beings were expected to be perfectly integrated and thrifty, with every impulse and instinct providentially directed to their ultimate profit. Human nature is much blinder, more casual, and more generous than that. It is necessarily adjusted to the survival of the race rather than to the welfare of the individual. The few great masters of life, who have really brought things to a head in their own persons, have never left children: their empires have passed to their nephews or their generals, and their wisdom to their disciples. As to the prolific rabble, Nature does not care how unhappy or deluded we are, if only we can blunder through and keep the world going. The most perfect animals are those completely subject to the routine of the hive or the ant-hill; they are links in a temporal mechanism which has solved the problem of perpetual motion: perhaps the human race, too, in America, may reach the same equilibrium. Is it a sacrifice or a joy to pick up those appointed burdens and to hasten to deposit them in the public granary? Probably the question never occurs to those worthy creatures: like good nuns they find their happiness in rising or sleeping, working or singing, mourning or rejoicing, according to the

chime of the bell or the day of the calendar. Even the profane, who think themselves free and original, are soon found treading the same mill: every lover, every mother, every soldier rushes into the glorious trap; and if all in this self-surrender is not sacrifice, it is not because the commitments into which Nature allures us are not burdensome and fatal, but rather because there seldom existed in us before that moment anything worth mentioning to be sacrificed: it was probably at the touch of those sacrificial passions that the man or the woman first awoke to a vivid life.

Some enthusiasts, like Fichte, would wish all life to be a hard sacrifice to duty, so that the whole of it might be truly heroic and divine. Materially such an economy might not be impossible; but morally the whole would then be without justification or excuse—an acrobatic feat, forced, painful, and ugly, persevered in by a vain obsession. We might say of it with the philosopher Bradley, that it was the best of possible worlds, and everything in it was a necessary evil. Nature is not so devilishly tense; she plays and loiters, she laughs and breaks out into a scattered consciousness, which, perhaps, a perfect economy would exclude; she renders much that is instrumental also self-justifying, by the pleasure of exercising that natural function. This free play, this inner pause and enrichment redeem the whirligig of existence from vanity, and turn its heavy prose into poetry. And it is only because the parts are good each in itself that a real sacrifice of any of them is possible; for sacrifice would not be sacrifice if the sacrificial impulse was all in all, and there was nothing else good in a man which he might surrender. Sacrifice first becomes possible, and constantly necessary, in a wayward being imperfectly unified; and



in him it may be fruitful, because by restraining each of his impulses on occasion, and discharging them only in a certain measure and in a certain order, a decent harmony can be established among them. Then the subjection of each fond passion is a reasonable precaution, and the orderly release of them all an admirable discipline: for this harmony when once formed is exceedingly sweet and beautiful in itself, and impossible to sacrifice to anything better. It is never out of place to think and to act intelligently, and there is no occasion to give the hysterical names of Duty or Self-Sacrifice to what is simply a happy art and a rational compromise.

This life of reason is like the crystallizing principle that turns the common atoms of carbon into a diamond; it lends to our animal impulses a nobility which they never had in themselves and which they lose at once if they are liberated. The passions are our moral atoms, each, no doubt, possessing an organization and a life of its own: but how ugly and poor! Cupid and Mars, who prompt in a civilized soul the most sublime consecrations, are in their own persons strangely cruel, silly, and dull; and except in that single sanctuary, where their inspiration is qualified and restrained by many a venerable rite, they are rather demons than gods; their irresponsible fury breaks out like an epidemic or a conflagration anywhere and everywhere in this flat world. There is no more hideous centipede than life in general.

BRUCE DICKINS

## DOCTOR JAMES'S POWDER

A FOOTNOTE TO EIGHTEENTH-  
CENTURY LITERATURE

Ward's Pill, which 'flies at once to the particular Part of the Body on which you desire to operate', and Bishop Berkeley's Tar-Water, which goes to work in a subtler, more metaphysical manner, are well known to all who have found rest and refreshment in eighteenth-century literature. A third contemporary patent medicine, Dr. Hooper's Female Pill, I have seen advertised in my own time. But of all the proprietary panaceas for eighteenth-century ills not one can rival Dr. James's Fever Powder. It was patronized by Royalty; it was rumoured that it had precipitated a constitutional crisis. It was administered to peers for smallpox, to puppies for distemper. It caused a *revulsion* in the fame of Eton School; it was introduced by Dr. Barnard, and in a little while 'the decrease of deaths by fever . . . were unequivocal proofs that a new era had arisen'. Its praises were said or sung by three generations of men of letters—from Fielding to Coleridge. Fielding declares in *Amelia* that in almost any country but England it would have brought 'public Honours and Rewards' to his 'worthy and ingenious Friend Dr. *James*'. Gray bids Mason 'remember James's powder. I have great faith in their efficacy'. If Gray had faith, Horace Walpole had a superstitious veneration for 'St. James of Compost-*antimony*, to whom St. Luke was an ignorant quack'. 'He cannot cure death; but he can most

complaints that are not mortal or chronical'—'anything but the villainy of physicians.' 'I have such faith in this powder, that I believe I should take it if the house was on fire.' 'Oh! if it were not too late to give her James's Powder,' was his despairing cry when Madame du Deffand lay on her deathbed and her physician had refused, saying the powder 'wou'd kill her by vomiting'—as it probably would have done, if one can judge from Lord Waldegrave's end described in an earlier letter by Walpole. But Walpole never tired of recommending James's Powder 'for cough—for gout—for smallpox—for everything', if one may quote from the index to the late Mrs. Paget Toynbee's monumental edition of the *Letters*. Christopher Smart dedicated his 'Hymn to the Supreme Being' to Dr. James, who had thrice rescued him from the grave in a manner almost miraculous. Goldsmith's deeds speak louder than words, and room may be found for Cowper's milder tribute: 'I am bound to honour James's powder; not only for the services it has often rendered to myself, but still more for having been the means of preserving a life ten times more valuable to society than mine is ever likely to be'. Cumberland's verses to Dr. Robert James, which Johnson thought good enough *qua* ode, will be quoted later. Coleridge's hypothetical—James and Walpole would have demurred at the adjective—case of a fellow vending poison under the name of James's Powder is testimony less direct, but interesting as evidence that the powder was in high repute in the early years of the nineteenth century.

The discoverer of this wonder-working compound was Robert James (1705–76), whose life and achievement are well outlined in the *Dictionary of National Biography* article by the late Sir Norman Moore. It suffices here to

say that, unlike 'Spot' Ward of the Pill, he was a fully qualified physician—B.A. Oxon. (1726), M.D. Cantab. (1728), L.R.C.P. (1745)—and the anecdote he told to elucidate the difference between a doctor and an apothecary is uncomplimentary to the latter. Johnson thought well of his ability, saying: 'No man brings more mind to his profession', and his opinion was shared by one at least of the Faculty, the eccentric but fair-minded Dr. Battie. There is, moreover, a graceful reference to James in Johnson's *Life of Edmund Smith*. They had been school-fellows at Lichfield, and later Johnson had helped to draw up the proposals and had written the dedication for James's *Medicinal Dictionary*, which appeared in three volumes folio in 1743. The dedication to Dr. Mead is readily accessible in Boswell, who is also the authority for Johnson's contribution to the body of the work. *Johnson's Dictionary*, in its turn, owes something to James: 'My knowledge of physick', said Johnson, 'I learnt from Dr. James, whom I helped in writing the proposals for his Dictionary and also a little in the Dictionary itself. I also learnt from Dr. Lawrence, but was then grown more stubborn.' Johnson had, however, a mean opinion of James as a Hellenist, and wrote to Dr. Brocklesby in the last year of his life: 'I never thought well of Dr. James's compounded medicines; his ingredients appeared to me sometimes inefficacious and trifling, sometimes heterogeneous and destructive of each other.' The particular compound—apparently not the Fever Powder—prescribed by Brocklesby he dismissed with 'He that writes thus, surely writes for show'.

The Fever Powder, which seems to have resembled the *pulvis antimonialis* of the Pharmacopoeia, was patented in 1746, and the right of sale made over to John Newbery,

who combined most profitably the functions of book-seller-publisher and wholesale and retail druggist. One side of the business fostered the other; Goody Two-Shoes' father was 'seized with a violent Fever in a Place where Dr. *James's* Powder was not to be had, and died miserably'.

An even more palpable puff was Dr. James's *Dissertation*, which first appeared in 1748, and went through numerous editions. The copy from which the following extracts are taken is of the sixth edition of 1764—*A Dissertation on Fevers and Inflammatory Distempers . . . by R. James, M.D. . . . to which is added, An Account of the Success with which the Fever Powder has been given in the Small-pox, Yellow Fever, Slow Fever, and Rheumatism*. In the introduction the author assigns reasons in favour of his specific. 'One is, that Mr. *Newbery*, besides what he has given to Objects of Charity, has, since its Publication, disposed of 1,612,800 Doses, and, perhaps, the Discoverer of it has given away to the Indigent near as many; for it has been refused to no poor Person who has asked for it at his House, whether he was at home or not: and yet few or no Complaints have been made of its Want of Efficacy, or of any ill Effects it has produced, though it has been exhibited principally by Persons utterly void of all medicinal Knowledge, and without the least Pretence to it.' In the hands of the Faculty it had been less successful. A second reason given is 'the Virulence and Rancour with which the Fever Powder, and its Inventor, have been attacked and persecuted by the Venders of Medicines, and their Abettors. For with less Efficacy their Interests would have been proportionably less in Danger; inso-much, that it would not have been worth their Trouble to sacrifice Candor, Honour, Truth, and Reputation to

an Opposition, which Virtue and Religion would have prohibited, and Prudence might have foretold to be ineffectual.' A third argument 'in Favour of this Medicine may be deduced from the Bills of Mortality', from which 'the impartial Reader will undoubtedly have some Satisfaction in observing, that since the Year 1750, about which Time the Powder began to be in Reputation, till the End of the Year 1763, fewer have died, upon an Average, than in any preceding thirteen Years, during the last forty-five Years; though the Increase of Inhabitants has, in that Time, been very considerable, and the Seasons have not been remarkably healthy.' The regrettable rise in mortality for 1762 and 1763 is easily explained by 'the epidemical Distemper, commonly known by the Name of the *Influenza*', by the subsequent hard winter, and by the arrival of numerous soldiers and sailors demobilised 'in no likely Condition to survive the Year'. Moreover, 'about the latter End of 1761, many Chymists in *London* began to counterfeit the Fever Powder, and recommend their Adulterations as equally effectual, with all the Confidence that might be expected from Avarice and Knavery. And, no doubt, many have perished by this infamous Delusion. About the same *Æra* great Numbers of those whose Employment is to attend the Sick, cunningly exhibited to their Patients something, which they asserted was *like the Fever Powder*, and *would do as well*. I leave it to the Relations of those who took this *Something*, to judge of the Consequence; for I suppose few, or none of them who were thus treated, survive. My own Judgment I have formed from upwards of a hundred Cases I have collected, in which this *Similitude* has been given, in almost all of which the Patient has died.' It is most important, therefore, to make sure that the

powders are the genuine article—'sold, Wholesale and Retale, by *J. Newbery*, at the *Bible and Sun* in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*, opposite the North Door of the Church. Price *Two Shillings and Sixpence*' for four doses—and see the seal of them is intact. All this is prefatory to the *Dissertation*, which is illustrated by notes of divers cases. Their details were pleasing only to a medical ear, and it is sufficient to record that grateful tributes had been received from all quarters of the globe—if not from China to Peru, from the East Indies to Surinam. In their stead may be quoted the last four stanzas of Richard Cumberland's 'Ode to Doctor Robert James', published in 1776:

After apostrophizing James as

Oh thou, to whom such healing power is giv'n,  
The delegate, as we believe, of heaven;

bidding him

Here take thy interposing stand;  
Here wave thy medicated wand,

and describing his own son's fever, he winds up

Is there no drug to cool that burning breast:

No chance for one short moment's rest?

Is there no hope?—'Tis past—I see

Art can no more; the rest is left for me.

Come then, this wonder-working charm receive;

The last command thy father hath to give:

The dying youth all o'er convuls'd they raise,

He to the last the well-known voice obeys:

The mother aids the draught, and, as she aids it, prays.

Soft awhile! let all be still,  
And wait high Heav'n's disposing will.  
Now in each other's eyes we stare  
With looks, that ask if Hope be there:  
Meanwhile the magic drug, at strife  
With the detested foe of life,  
Runs to the heart, mounts to the brain,  
And visits each corrupted vein;  
Where'er it comes bids tumult cease,  
And hail the messenger of peace.

Now, lengthening on the list'ning ear,  
The soft subsiding sigh we hear;  
His breath, a wint'ry storm before,  
That loudly lash'd the sounding shore,  
Now sinks into a summer breeze,  
That gently lifts the swelling seas;  
O'er his parch'd skin a healthful dew appears,  
The stern distemper sheds repentant tears;  
He smiles, he turns, he sleeps—Oh joy! Begone, my fears!

Haste then, my Muse, tear down the oaken bough,  
To crown the great Physician's brow;  
See that the mystic branch is broke  
From sage Apollo's delphic oak;  
Then, dripping from Castalia's spring,  
Hither the civic garland bring;  
And as your tuneful fingers tye  
The votive chaplet, raise on high  
Your sounding notes; provoke again  
A louder yet, and yet a louder strain;  
Then to the temple of immortal Fame,  
And on the brightest tablet stamp his living name.



It is difficult to take seriously an ode addressed to the discoverer of a patent medicine, especially one so disfigured by false wit. It seems clear, however, from a passage in Cumberland's *Memoirs* that it must be taken as a perfectly genuine expression of personal feeling. There are fashions in poetry as in physic.

As may be gathered from James's own statement, neither he nor his powder was without detractors. Already in 1753 Lord Chesterfield had ridiculed their pretensions in *The World*, and it was currently believed that James was indebted for the discovery to a German named Schwanberg, who died almost starving while he and many of his successors in the sale of the medicine rode in their coaches. But the *D.N.B.* article shows that this report was quite unjustified, and it is likely that no more faith is to be placed in the story that George III's loss of reason was due to his taking a most extraordinary dose of James's Powder of his own accord. If that had really been the case, it is odd that his medical attendants should have prescribed them during his illness. It should be mentioned, however, that, according to Fanny Burney (16th December 1785), the Princess Elizabeth was trying James's Powder. 'She had been blooded', said the King, 'twelve times in this last fortnight, and had lost seventy-five ounces of blood, besides undergoing blistering and other discipline.' After this drastic treatment it may not be superfluous to add that the Princess died only in 1840.

That, ignorantly administered, the remedy might be more deadly than the disease is shown by an entry in the journal of a Naval Surgeon who was serving in the *Monarque* in 1759. 'After a very stormy cruise, often weeks in the Bay of Biscay, we put into Plymouth—the crew being sickly and the old ship by hard straining had got

very leaky. The admiral being much prejudiced in favour of James's powder insisted on its being administered in all cases of fever. This proved fatal to many who laboured under the low putrid fever that then prevailed, from the violence of its operation, in many cases hastening the fatal period so much that we sometimes buried four or five in a day. This occasioned a remonstrance to the admiral who then gave up his favourite nostrum, and the mortality ceased of course.'

The classic instance is, however, the lamentable end of Dr. Goldsmith, who, in the late Mr. Austin Dobson's phrase, may be said to have laid down his life for the powders. The story is told in *An Account of the late Dr. Goldsmith's Illness so far as relates to the Exhibition of Dr. James's Powders . . . by William Hawes, Apothecary* (Third Edition with Corrections and an Appendix, London 1774). At 11 p.m. on 25th March 1774, Hawes was called in by Goldsmith, who complained of a violent pain extending over the fore-part of his head and informed Hawes that he had already taken two ounces of ipecacuanha wine as a vomit. He asked for James's Powder, against which Hawes protested as 'a medicine very improper at that time' and advised a gentle opiate. A second opinion was also adverse to the powders; but Goldsmith persisted in his own resolution and took, not one, but several doses, which so reduced him that medical effort was in vain. He died on April 4th, and Hawes, who had certainly done his best for a troublesome patient, thought it necessary to defend his professional conduct. In the pamphlet mentioned above he admitted that 'much good has arisen from the proper and skilful exhibition of *Dr. James's Powders*, in many cases of fevers', but protested against the indiscriminate use of it by

layfolk. It 'has become so universally fashionable, as to be administered in almost all feverish complaints, and in all stages of fevers, and too often suffered to be given at the discretion of Old Women, or, at least, by those who cannot have the smallest pretensions to medical knowledge'. It was used, in fact, very much as aspirin is to-day. John Newbery had died in 1767, attended in his last illness by Dr. James, and his tomb bade passengers stay and 'contemplate the Sagacity that discerned, and the Skill that introduced the most powerful discovery in the annals of Medicine'. But his son and successor, Francis junior, alike as Goldsmith's publisher, and as the proprietor of the fatal powder, was furious. To discredit Hawes's story affidavits were published signed by Goldsmith's attendants—his man, John Eyles, his laundress, Mary Ginger, and his night nurse, Sarah Smith. From these affidavits certain details unrecorded by Hawes (e.g. that Goldsmith had damned him for the supposed mistake he had made) can be gathered. Hawes's reply is found in the Appendix to his third edition: 'I was, indeed, somewhat prepared for the scurrility which has been thrown out against me, by a very expressive declaration which Mr. Francis Newbery, jun. made to me himself, and the meaning of which could not be mistaken; namely, that "say what I would, THE FEVER-POWDER WAS HIS PROPERTY, AND HE WOULD DEFEND IT".' Newbery thought proper to assert that the powder supplied by Hawes and taken by Goldsmith was not the genuine sort—which assertion Hawes countered by printing the following declaration:

'I DECLARE that Dr. Goldsmith refused having any medicines administered to him whatever, excepting Dr.

*James's Powder*; upon which I returned to my master's house, and carried one paper, which I took from the packet, and divided it into four parts, that it might be administered in proper doses. And I further declare that it was the Genuine *Fever-Powder* bought at the shop of Francis Newbery, jun. in St. Paul's Church-yard.

‘EDMUND DEARNS,

‘May 1, 1774.

*Journeyman to Mr. Hawes.*’

This was further fortified by a declaration from Hawes's servant, Mary Pratt.

Having thus demolished Newbery's assertion, Hawes went on to publish as a counterstroke a letter he had received from an anonymous correspondent who claimed to have inside information about the preparation of the powder. ‘A PERSON now is, and has been employed for many years to make it, who is often *much in liquor at the time she is going through the process*, which takes up many hours before a strong fire. Without doubt, this may occasion the *Powder not always to be made alike*, and many times improperly prepared.’ The sting was barbed for Newbery by the signature MEANWELL—which his patrons would recognize as the surname of Mistress Margery, commonly known as Goody Two-Shoes, whose husband, also, died early of a fever, though not to our knowledge in a place where Dr. James's Powder was unobtainable.

Newbery had better reason than Goldsmith to curse the name of Hawes. In 1776 Dr. James died, and another Hawes, a chemist employed by him at Lambeth, seized the opportunity to claim that he, and he alone, possessed the great arcanum. The prudent Newbery, who had laid in a stock of powders sufficient for many years' demand,

‘This, his Fever Powder had never been made at Lambeth, and that the said Hawes was never employed in any part of the process’. Thereupon Hawes maintained that Dr. James was imbecile when the affidavit was signed. Counter-declarations followed, and the evidence was summed up by Johnson in a single crushing sentence. The claimant was driven from the field and Newbery could sell his compound in peace. His Analeptic Pills and Cephalic Snuff—under those names at least—have gone the way of John of Gaddesden’s tree frogs and the triturated mummy beloved of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century physicians: but Dr. James’s Powder is still prepared by his successors. I bought a dose the other day.

KATHLEEN WALLACE

## RED LACQUER

## I

## WATERFRONT, SHANGHAI

Here in this narrow street stand I  
Whose walls are cliffs against the sky,  
And every window hums, a hive  
Where furious brokers sweat and strive.

While at the street's end, wings outspread,  
A junk with sails of lacquer-red  
Superb, serene, too calm for pride,  
Goes stealing outward on the tide.

## II

## HIGH NOON

White sunlight and the stillness of death lay on the outer courtyard of the *yamen*. In front of the central gate the devil-wall cast its shadow on the chalk-white dust, that tall sheet of upright stone that stands like a screen before the gateway to keep out the evil spirits. It had not fulfilled its purpose, though. For, inside the bleak court-room they stood, chained hideously at wrist and ankle, the eleven men who made up the last of the notorious Siao Foong gang, kidnappers and murderers, every one. Evil was palpable as poisonous fog in the court-room this summer morning. They had been the terror of the district

for two years. It was they who had kidnapped the only son of Wu-mai-dah, the millionaire silver merchant; who had foully murdered the miserable bank *compradore* in his rickshaw; who had lured the Chinese police inspector to a remote tea-house and there cut his throat. Two only of their number had dared to inform on the gang, and these, the remainder, had massacred their wives and children in revenge. They stood before the judge and heard their sentence of death.

In this final hour, each man could claim a hearing for anything he might wish to say. There was a certain outbreak of clamour, a babel of various voices hoarsely shouting that they were innocent, that they were falsely accused, falsely incriminated. But it was brief. It died out into mutterings and the jangling of the heavy manacles.

One of the men stepped forward.

'Your Excellency! When they arrested me, I was wearing, not these rags, but a long gown, an honourable garment, that was my father's and his father's also. I prize it for family reasons. Will Your Excellency give an order that I may go to my death wearing it?'

'It shall be done.'

'I thank Your Excellency.'

A boy standing beside him elbowed his way to the prisoners' bar.

'Your Excellency! I would ask that my parents, who are in Canton, need not know how I died.'

There was a short consultation. Then,

'The parents of Sen Yu shall be informed that their son died on military service.'

'I thank the court.'

One of the court reporters had held a whispered conversation with a clerk, who had gone out, and who now

reappeared with his hands full of packets of cigarettes. These he handed round to the chained men. There was a murmur of appreciation which swelled into something like a dull roar. The shaven heads nodded amiably to the reporter; there were grins of thanks and approval. A constable moved from figure to figure, imperturbably lighting the cigarettes which the manacled hands could not manipulate.

A man at the bar spoke in a hush which deepened to a sense of tragedy that was alive and taut in the room. He was the husband of the only woman involved in the gang. He besought the court, as he acknowledged himself to be guilty and as his life was the forfeit, that his wife might be allowed to go free.

‘. . . The honourable gentlemen have wives of their own. . . .’

The shadow of human feeling passed over the listening faces, visibly, like a cloud over standing grain. But the court could see no way here. The sentence must stand. A constable’s arm caught the man as he stumbled on his way to the van.

A weird shaft of humour cut through the room when it became apparent that one of the condemned men was reeling drunk, and when it was whispered that a court official had ordered wine at his own expense to be given to the men while they waited. He wavered grotesquely up the room to the prisoners’ bar, pirouetting round a wooden pillar when he found he could not walk through it, and when he reached the bar, he clung to it firmly, and broke into a violent denunciation of the prison food. He admitted his guilt, and waved aside his sentence with a nod of assent, but was vociferously indignant over the *chow* provided. He quieted down only when one of the



court officials had the happy thought of reminding him that his relatives had sent money to provide him with an honourable coffin.

One man smiled pleasantly at the court. A small man, with a plump face and a stammer. Nothing whatever to brand him as one of the deadliest types of the Chinese underworld.

'You call me bad,' he told the court amiably. 'But I am no worse than any of your detectives. Only, I am on the wrong side. That's all. *They* kill a man, and are commended—promoted, even. I kill a man, and my life is taken. Very well. It is not a matter of great importance, but that is how it is. A matter of which side, Your Excellency—that's all. . . !'

As he walked back to his place, he sighted a figure among the onlookers whom he recognized with a cheerful shout.

'Lao Tsui! It is Lao Tsui! The cunning devil! I carried him off last March—but he escaped. And here he is, to see Hu Da condemned to die—well, well!'

His late victim joined cordially in the greeting, and made his way forward, and thrust a large bottle of beer into the hands of his erstwhile kidnapper. Hu Da drank a long draught, and nodded his thanks, drawing his hand across his lips as he was led out.

The last man with a request to make spoke low and quietly, but as he spoke the noises and chuckles subsided like ebbing water, and utter silence was presently round him, so that his low and husky words were heard as though they had been shouted.

'Your Excellency! My wife is a prisoner in the Hillside Gaol. She should have given birth to her child yesterday. May I have news of her?'

There was a rustle and stir at the back of the room. Proceedings were delayed till the news was forthcoming. It was given in a whisper to the judge, and by him in a scarcely louder tone to the prisoner. The man put his shaking hands over his face and an impassive constable guided him out of the room, where the only sound was his smothered sobbing. His wife had died in childbirth that morning. His infant son lived, and her mother had taken the baby to her own village.

\*            \*            \*            \*

At midday a party of riders drew rein on the shaded bank above the road out to the hills, to let a stream of rickshaws pass.

‘Procession of some sort?’ hazarded the Consul adjusting his glasses.

‘No—by God——’

He bent down and took the rein of the squat white pony which his eight-year-old daughter rode.

‘Come along, Pat—back into the shade. We’ll let ’em pass, shall we? No end of a dust——’

But the Consul’s wife had seen. Her face was emptied of colour as she slowly turned her pony and followed her husband and child back into the trees. The line of rickshaws each holding a figure bound with ropes; in each a face against the hood; a grey and stricken, lolling head; slack lips and glazing eyes. As the procession padded its way through the dust to the hill of execution where the crowd waited, and the gleaming blades, the Consul’s wife shuddered, stooping down over her pony’s neck, sickened. Behind the hill, behind the screening trees, the factory whistles blared sharply. Noon. . . .

## III

## THE COOLIE WOMEN

Their feet go padding, padding, the dust of the roads.  
The chant of their woven voices dips and lifts  
As their shoulders sag and strain to the balanced loads—  
The women who bear the gifts, the wedding-gifts.

Heaped are the scarlet trays with sweetmeats and wines,  
Bales of silk for the scented limbs of a bride,  
Till the withered arms stretch taut into knotted lines  
Clamped to the poles as arms that are crucified.

Waxen flowers for a small proud head piled high,  
Savoury meats, a goose with feathers of snow;  
The children follow and shout as the feast rides by—  
Over the dust, padding the dust, they go.

So, down the ages, grinding the dusty ways  
The long line wavers and dims with its shuffling tread;  
Withered women, padding down lifeless days,  
Bearing the load that is crown for a happier head.

## READERS' REPORTS

*Jehovah's Day*, by Mary Borden. (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.) When a woman novelist deserts the chronicle of recorded experience, the novel of situation and character, for another phase of novel-writing which we are agreed to call the 'novel of ideas' (in parenthesis, it should be noted that for the downright feminine temperament these arbitrary divisions possess a much higher value than is generally allowed by her contemporary male equivalent), we are apt to complain either that her grasp of ideas is inadequate and her treatment of them disagreeably pedantic, or else that she takes hold of them with a sort of prehensile tenacity and hugs them to death: her excursions into the world of ideas are distinguished by a certain frolicsomeness, a certain exuberance and *abandon* which it is sometimes positively embarrassing to watch. She is either the Hypatia of the high school or a *grande cocotte* of the intellect from whose philanderings our masculine *pudeur* prefers to avert its eyes. Miss Borden, on the other hand—though one could wish, now and again, that she was capable of forgoing an opportunity, that her mind was not so terrifyingly receptive, that she was not such an astonishingly quick scholar of Mr. H. G. Wells's latest and least interesting work—steers an unusually adroit course betwixt the Charybdis of, say, Miss Rose Macaulay and the Scylla of Miss Rebecca West. *Jehovah's Day* is a long and very entertaining book. The reader is soothed throughout by the almost masculine *bonhomie*, the peculiar intellectual hard-headedness with which the novelist controls her theme. What a theme, ranging from the opening chapter of the *Outline of History* to the fiasco of the General

Strike! And, even if Miss Borden's prose is loose and far from neat, how capable and how abundant is its unfolding! Unequal it may be, but it is a repast at which we are never stinted. A critic can so seldom leave the female novelist's *table d'hôte* except unsatisfied and with the uneasy consciousness that the intellectual feast of which he has been participating is probably no more nor less than a projection into later life of the familiar doll's-house tea.

*Postures*, by Jean Rhys (*Chatto & Windus*. 7s. 6d.); *Bad Girl*, by Vina Delmar (*Allan*. 7s. 6d.), are both the work of young female novelists, but otherwise as dissimilar as it is possible for two books to be. They may be taken together because each of them is typical of a certain clearly defined stage in female novel-writing—one rudimentary, the other advanced, neither of them by any means negligible. Miss Delmar is an American, and her novel has enjoyed a considerable Transatlantic *succès de scandale*. She represents the first stage in the female novelist's development, when the writer seems chiefly concerned with the liberal exercise of her own absorbent powers; she imbibes experience raw, and skilfully ejects it onto paper after only such a slight process of digestion and elimination as is necessary to produce a concise and readable narrative. Very readable her *Bad Girl* is. Who but the most arrant cynic or rankest misogynist could help being interested in this comparatively unsentimental, transparently honest and profusely detailed account of exactly what it feels like to get yourself seduced, find yourself pregnant for the first time, consult an underworld abortionist, have a baby, and so forth? . . . Now the accessories of Miss Rhys's book are as bleak and charmless as Miss Delmar's cosy

materialism is warm and inviting. Miss Delmar can spin us clever dialogue by the yard, wrap us up to the neck in 'atmosphere', put us firmly at our ease in any given situation—and no more. . . . Miss Rhys possesses the infinitely rarer faculty of suggesting the emotional anatomy of a situation in all its forbidding nakedness. Nowhere have I seen her book, a first novel, though she has previously published a volume of short stories, receive its due share of praise. *Postures* is bare, plain, ugly, but, in spite of itself, in spite of the crabbed, ungainly manner of the writing, is impressive and at moments, as if by sheer disregard of all the amenities, really beautiful. I wish I could think that it stood in any danger of popularity.

*Joseph and His Brethren*, by H. W. Freeman. (Chatto & Windus. 7s. 6d.) Plain, honest country fare, from which a reader should not allow himself to be frightened away by the extraordinarily stupid and inept little foreword contributed by Mr. R. H. Mottram: 'this Cocktail Age. . . .' etc., in the best Sunday-newspaper vein. It is refreshing nowadays to find a novel of country life not wildly melodramatized; certainly a book worth reading.

*My Brother Jonathan*, by Francis Brett Young (Heinemann. 10s. 6d.), has all the unfashionable virtues, and for these is likely, I am afraid, to be made to pay more dearly at the hands of modern critics than for any positive demerit. An extremely long book, perhaps unnecessarily long, given its content, it is 'well-constructed' in the nowadays unpopular meaning of the word; it is solid, honestly written and shows the same steady advance which has been noticeable in Mr. Brett Young's work ever since he wrote *The Tragic Bride*. The story of a doctor in the

Midlands, the most moving pages of the narrative are concerned with his surgical feats, each of them coinciding with some dramatic and momentous turn of his fortunes. Mr. Brett Young keeps all his promises; that the kind of promises he makes are precisely those in whose performance the present generation feels least interest is, I dare say, our fault and not the novelist's.

*Keats's Shakespeare*, by Caroline F. E. Spurgeon. (Oxford University Press and Humphrey Milford. 25s.) Travelling in the United States, Dr. Spurgeon was asked if she would care to see a copy of Shakespeare marked by Keats. It turned out to be the seven volumes of the Chiswick edition which Keats unpacked in the Southampton inn on 15th April 1817, and which he gave to Severn in Rome. Dr. Spurgeon has merited her good fortune by the use she has made of it. She has reproduced the marked text of the four best read plays: *Tempest*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*; has added the markings from the Hampstead *Troilus*, and given a detailed account of the others with much suggestive criticism, and a list of the Shakespearian parallels in *Endymion*. The result is a work of absorbing interest, not only to professed students of Keats.

It has sent me, and will, I hope, send most readers, back to Mr. Middleton Murry's *Keats and Shakespeare* (Oxford University Press). Dr. Spurgeon's reprint gives us Keats in actual contact with Shakespeare's poetry: Mr. Murry's thesis is that there was something more than contact, and that in his exploration of the world of pure poetry and intuitive perception, Keats was in a real but mysterious way 'with Shakespeare' and, but for Shakespeare, alone. They had in common a boundless fluidity

of perception, first of the natural world, 'the realm of Flora and old Pan', and then of human emotion. They had—and year for year Keats had in an even higher degree than Shakespeare—the capacity for the poetic expression of their perceptions. But Shakespeare achieved, and Keats was determined to achieve, a complete harmony of feeling, condemning nothing, rejecting nothing, and rendered visible in poetry combining with the most exquisite beauty of detail the more sovereign beauty of an entire comprehension. As Shakespeare had gone out of the light and laughter of the *Dream* into the dark night of *Troilus*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Hamlet*, and re-emerged content and accepting—but with his poetic faculty as strong and bright as ever—in the *Tempest*, so Keats was ready to sacrifice *Lamia* and *Hyperion* and the *Odes*, and take upon himself the burden of Shakespeare's experience, his surrender to passion and the daily round, in the faith that in this way only he could rise again to Shakespeare's final height.

Turn back from Mr. Murry to the reprint of Keats's *Tempest* and the parallels with *Endymion*. Keats must have known that whenever he liked he could write mere poetry as good as

thy poleclipt vineyard,  
And thy sea marge, steril and rocky hard,  
Where thou thyself dost air. The queen of the sky,  
Whose watery arch and messenger am I.

There is, in fact, plenty of it in *Endymion*:

When the last sun his autumn tresses shook  
And the tanned harvesters rich armfuls took.

What he was not yet equal to was the sudden illuminating flash from afar:



Be not afeard: the isle is full of noises—  
I cried to dream again—

A turn or two I'll walk  
To still my beating mind—

and they are doubly marked. And when he set side by side, as Dr. Spurgeon has done,

we are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.

and

the Morphean fount  
Of that fine element that visions, dreams,  
And fitful whims of sleep are made of.

he must have felt that his apprenticeship was hardly begun. Nor was it ever ended. There were still half a dozen poems to write, and then he would begin—where Shakespeare left off.

For it seems clear that Keats's intention, when he felt that his training was complete, was to re-create the poetic drama as the vehicle of that conception of soul-making which he believed himself to share with Shakespeare, and which he felt to be truer and more profound than the Christian scheme of salvation. Would he have succeeded? We can only say that he would have brought to the work faculties rarely in the same measure united in any man: infinite receptivity, heroic purpose, a clear vision of the end, unequalled mastery of all the means except actual stage-craft. His natural insight into the theatre appears in his judgements on Kean; at times he seems to admit him as a third to his own communion with Shakespeare; and Dr. Spurgeon's transcripts show the vigilance with which

he examined Shakespeare's workmanship for the revealing phrase, the unconscious trick of speech, the 'by-writing' with which he gives roundness to his characters. This secret once mastered, nothing but experience was lacking to make the achievement possible. But experience, when it came, brought mortal sickness with it.

### SOME TYPES OF DETECTION

Mr. Chesterton, somewhere in his works, has referred to the thin, but awful line which separates the good man from the prig, adding that we might have difficulty in defining either of the two types, but none in recognizing both at sight. Some such fine and beautiful line lies between the good and the bad detective story—or, perhaps one should rather say, between the successful and the unsuccessful, since one has in mind in this comparison only the type of story which would be good if it could, while there is always remaining outside the pale a vast heap of stuff whose writers have, or seem to have, no concern whatever with its quality. On these outsiders, however, it is seldom worth while to waste space, save for very particular reasons; but where a man who is obviously trying to write a good novel has in fact written a very bad one, then the case begins to repay discussion, and as our bag this month contains a very suitable specimen of both the successful and the unsuccessful, we may as well begin with Mr. Fielding's *The Chung Problem* (Collins. 7s. 6d.), and Mr. Connington's *Case with Nine Solutions* (Gollancz. 7s. 6d.).

These two specimens have, in fact, a good deal in common. They are both of the intellectual or chessboard type; that is to say, they stick pretty closely to the unravelling of the mystery (Mr. Connington keeps the

closer of the two), and do not allow irrelevant incidents, atmosphere, persons, or jokes to distract the attention of the reader. As stylists, they are both on the heavy side, though Mr. Connington is incomparably the better writer; and neither has that easy sureness of touch which makes one feel that Mrs. Christie or Mr. Mason, to take only two examples, can handle with perfect ease any plot which they may happen to pick up. These facts imply that both writers have set themselves a fairly hard task. Rejecting almost all extraneous aid, they have resolved to stand or fall by the excellence of their several plots; and the result is that there is a world between them. Mr. Connington stands triumphantly, while Mr. Fielding falls as flat as any book yet reviewed in these pages.

Let us take the main points one by one. First, the simple question of interest. It is almost impossible to put down *The Case with Nine Solutions* unfinished; it is equally difficult to read *The Chung Problem* through to the end—and its end is a very long way off! For sheer number of words, this book must be the season's record, and when that is coupled with the way in which the plot flops and drags, the reviewer may be forgiven a certain animosity. Secondly, Mr. Connington has achieved exactly the right amount of vividness, in his characters and in his physical setting, to suit the somewhat austere design of his plot. His characters are not highly coloured, but they are firmly drawn and differentiated; we have quite a serviceably clear impression of the society of his provincial town, and of the foggy winter night on which the medical *locum* drove out in response to an urgent call and found himself alone in an empty house with a dying man. There is no doubt, in the longest dialogue, who is speaking—an important point, this, for detective writers to note!—

and the interplay of Sir Clinton Driffield and his Watson is exceedingly well worked out. But Mr. Fielding's characters are stuffed sacks with labels; there are four or five indistinguishable detectives and at least as many indistinguishable suspects; and it is quite impossible to remember who any of them are and what they did last, or to care what they are going to do next. Even where Mr. Fielding has attempted to characterize, the result, as in the case of his working man, is too wooden to be believed. Lastly, Mr. Connington has played fair and Mr. Fielding has not. In both books, the detective explains the crime and his deductions at the end; but, whereas Sir Clinton Driffield has faithfully given his colleague all the available information as it appeared to him, Mr. Fielding's Inspector Pointer conceals most of his until the last four pages—and a good deal of it is guess-work at that. One result is that, owing to Mr. Connington's fair play, the intelligent reader will probably guess his criminal well before the end of his book, whereas no reader could arrive at Mr. Fielding's except by pure chance. But most readers, probably, will be too bored to try.

Mr. Connington's book is competent and well-managed in every way. It is by far the best novel he has given us to date, and (highest praise of all) is really not unworthy of his publisher's puff. He is heartily to be congratulated on his achievement. *The Chung Problem*, on the other hand, is certainly the worst book yet written by Mr. Fielding, and its defects are not balanced by the way in which it is produced. Messrs. Collins, as detective publishers of considerable standing, ought to be ashamed of this book. Presumably they are not responsible for the author's inadequate command of English grammar; but

for vile paper, bad proof-reading, and a positively loathsome jacket they *are* responsible, and in these respects they might well take a hint from the pleasant and workmanlike appearance of Messrs. Gollancz's product.

Now that Sherlock Holmes has at last been persuaded to issue his collected works in one volume (*The Complete Sherlock Holmes Stories*, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Murray. 8s. 6d.), it is fitting that their appearance should coincide with Dr. Thorndyke's latest triumph (*As A Thief in the Night*, by R. Austin Freeman. Hodder & Stoughton. 7s. 6d.). For Dr. Thorndyke is unquestionably Holmes's chief successor in the rôle of expert (as distinguished from that of tracker or sleuth), and on internal evidence it looks very much as though the doctor's brilliant rivalry was partly responsible for the terrible decline in the Baker Street consultant. No one who had a respectable childhood can really criticize Sherlock Holmes in a dispassionate manner; yet no sentimentalist can be blind to the fact that the two last of the five groups of stories in this collection are simply very bad indeed. Nor is it entirely irrelevant to notice that Dr. Thorndyke's rise to fame took place between the publication of the third and fourth groups. For the plain fact is that, as an expert, Dr. Thorndyke has Holmes beaten at the post. If Holmes had had the death of Harold Monkhouse to investigate, he would not have come within a mile of finding the murderer. His equipment was not good enough; and even in re-reading some of his own earlier triumphs, we are uneasily conscious that Dr. Thorndyke would not have been satisfied with them. For instance, in that very early case, *The Musgrave Ritual*, we find that Holmes unearthed a treasure by means of a seventeenth-century *questionnaire*, part of which was concerned with the length of the

shadow cast by an elm-tree. Holmes, learning the height of the elm from its nineteenth-century owner, measures with a tape and takes him straight to the spot; but Dr. Thorndyke, one is certain, would not so lightly have assumed that the top of an elm-tree would have remained in exactly the same place for over two hundred years. And this is only one of a series of cases in which Holmes, considered as an expert, was distinctly inferior. Yet from these two books it is equally plain why Dr. Thorndyke will never oust Holmes from his position as *the* detective of the world. Not only was Holmes the first-come: he is a character, and Dr. Thorndyke is not. Dr. Thorndyke is an oyster, a block of teak, an Indian idol—or so his creator suffers him to be described—and though he is also, we are told, very handsome, very kind of heart, and always on the right side, one cannot have a really comradely affection for a block of teak, however handsome and kindhearted. A block of teak does not shoot bullets across the room, nor keep its tobacco in the Persian slipper, nor practise pig-sticking in order to trace a criminal, nor simulate epilepsy when on the chase, nor throw out immortal aphorisms such as that of the dog in the night-time; and it is the glory of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to have created the man who did all these things. For the rest, it is a great pleasure and satisfaction to have all the Holmes short stories collected in one volume; but we must express a really fervent hope that we have read the last of them.

The solution in Mr. Freeman's book is really a triumph of ingenuity, and the book is well worth seven and sixpence for the last chapter alone, in which it is expounded. Considered as a whole, however, it is certainly too long. The story would have been far better told in twenty-five

thousand instead of eighty thousand words, and the middle part, which is pure padding, is distinctly dull. Nothing whatever happens in it beyond a certain manœuvring of the characters, and as Mr. Freeman's characters, unless they are lawyers or old women, are invariably entirely without character, it is impossible to get up an interest in their manœuvres. The whole business of the narrator in this novel could have been told in one chapter greatly to the novel's advantage. Mr. Freeman is one of the very few detective writers who are better at short stories than at long ones. But for the sheer brilliance of the crime and its discovery, it is well worth while to plough through the tedious parts.

There are some occasions on which it is desirable to notice a book which, on the standards laid down in our first paragraph, is thoroughly bad. Mr. Hulbert Footner's *The Velvet Glove* (*Collins*. 7s. 6d.) is so bad that, if we had not heard of its author before, we should certainly not review it at all. But Mr. Footner, who is, by the way, an American, has done some work which, never of real class, is still not too bad; and when he presents a volume containing three stories, all of which are so bad and so slovenly in execution as to be unreadable, even to a hardened reviewer, it is surely time to call a halt. It cannot be too often emphasized that the writing of detective stories is a craft which must be properly learnt and conscientiously practised, just as much as the craft, say, of illumination, and that a detective story turned out anyhow is much worse than no story at all. It is a crime against a respectable, if not exalted, profession. Mr. Footner cannot have taken an ounce of pains with the stories in this book: they are abominably written, utterly incredible, devoid of all real detective work, and quite

pointless. Yet even here there are indications that Mr. Footner could have done much better if he had chosen; for he has something of an eye for both character and scenery. He has not chosen; and, as jealous guardians of the honour of the craft of the detective story, we protest that his rubbish, if it must be published at all, ought to be labelled, not 'detective story', but 'third-rate Yankee shocker'—and awarded a plough at that.

*My Native Land*, by Don Augustin Edwards (Benn. 28s.), while possessing almost every fault that a book can, nevertheless leaves the reader with a great desire to visit Chile, and the conviction that her present apologist is the man to consult before doing so. It is curious that, with such material to their hands, Don Augustin and his publisher should not have contrived some better contribution 'to the sixth International Congress of Historical Science' than this unwieldy volume illustrated by sketches that possess neither merit nor interest. The form of the book is descriptive; but its language is saturated in redundant emotionalism; and the author is continually trying to justify his country in the eyes of a vulgar press, by stressing the refinement of Santiago racing society or the worth of real property in Valparaiso. Despite this pandering to competitive modernism, copiously documented historical associations, ranging from the first Conquistadors to the English and Irish heroes of the War of Independence, are allowed to emerge. The best section is that which deals with the Magellan Straits and the Juan Fernandez islands in the extreme south; added to which is an interesting summary of theories regarding the statues of Easter Island, Chile's only colonial possession.



*Three Gifts. An Arab Love Story. Done into English by Sir Frank Swettenham. (John Lane the Bodley Head Ltd. 12s. 6d.)* The publishers of this book deserve our praise; it is both charming and inexpensive. Sir Frank Swettenham has translated into harmonious English prose, with witty interpolations, an eighteenth-century French work, *Tangu et Félimé, poème en IV Chants, par M. de la Harpe de l'Académie française*, which was first published at Paris in 1780, with illustrations by Marillier, and a note explaining that its theme, how a young man confided to an even younger woman the secret source of his prosperity, and the result, was 'drawn originally from the tales which Provençal writers borrowed from the Arabs'. The present (and first English) edition of 1,500 copies is excellently printed on thoroughly good paper, satisfactorily bound in half-linen and marbled boards, and is embellished with five remarkable reproductions, printed in colour and heightened with gold, of the hand-painted steel engravings which adorned the second French issue of 1780. Collectors of fine printing should hasten to their bookseller.

*Humdrum, by Harold Acton (Chatto & Windus. 7s. 6d.)*, is a rather slippery exercise in social satire. Mr. Acton is divided between the inclination to amuse himself—which, in several unkind and entertaining pages, he does very well—and the desire to amuse, shock, interest, astonish, alarm and titillate his readers. That is disastrous and, given the public for which his little book is presumably designed, not likely to be successful.

*Cagliostro, by Johannes von Guenther (Heinemann. 10s. 6d.)*, though advertised as a product of the modern school of

German historical novelists, is an old-fashioned historical novel of the kind which is apt to begin on 'a rainy night in the year 17—', and where the characters lose no time in announcing their names and broadly hinting the rôle they are destined to play. Surely a by no means adequate treatment of such a magnificent theme! Still, a mildly entertaining book.

Several interesting translations have appeared during the month, and of these quite the most interesting is Mr. R. R. Merton's English version of Lermontov's *A Hero of our Time*. (*Allan. 7s. 6d.*) In point of the translator's art it happens to be the least satisfactory; but then, as Prince Mirsky's foreword remarks, if Lermontov has hitherto received so very little notice from English critics, it is because his style offers an insuperable barrier. It is the kind of sparse, pure style which, while it affords a native ear endless delights, is almost impossible to reproduce in a foreign tongue. Mr. Merton's rendering, I have no doubt, is extremely conscientious, but is perhaps a trifle too opaque a medium for the delicacy of the original work. Thus the effect of the first story (the book is a collection of five stories loosely strung together) entirely fails, and it is the title-story which first startles us into a realization of Lermontov's greatness. Lermontov's position in Russian literature might be compared with that of Byron, had Byron, besides leaving behind him a mass of steadily depreciating verse, also laid the foundations of the modern English novel. Chekhov recorded his admiration of one story, *Taman*, as the finest ever written; and another, *A Hero of our Time* itself, seems to contain the germ of that new and strange manner of feeling which was the main contribution of Russian literature

to the literature of the world. Pechorin is the prototype of that ideal of superior irresponsibility which we associate with Dostoievsky's heroes; it is amusing to see Stavrogin develop from Manfred. Lermontov's hero is a figure all the more beautiful and significant because he is rudimentary, partially unformed, just as an archaic Apollo is more appealing than the full-fleshed product of later Greek statuary.

Miss Natalie Duddington's translation of Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter* (*Dent. 6s.*), on the other hand, is notably accomplished and smooth. A delightful book, restrainedly and rather naively written. At moments unexpectedly impressive.

Again, I have to lament a slight heavy-handedness in Mr. Lowe-Porter's English rendering of three stories by Thomas Mann (*Death in Venice. Secker. 7s. 6d.*). It is particularly evident in the story called *Tonio Kröger*, which read better in French. *Tristan*, a story in Mann's *Magic Mountain* vein, is more successful; and, on the whole, Mr. Lowe-Porter's version of *Death in Venice* itself compares favourably with the version published several years back in an American literary periodical, on which the contemporary English admiration of Mann is largely based. Ever since its first appearance there, I have been hoping for a reissue in book form. All things considered, the present volume is not disappointing.

*Great Britain in Egypt, by Major E. W. Polson-Newman. With foreword by General the Rt. Hon. Sir J. G. Maxwell. (Cassell. 15s.)* The author of this book purports to relate the history of the political relations of England with Egypt since shortly before the beginning of the occupation down to the present year. Nearly one-half of the book

is devoted to a detailed account of events previous to Lord Cromer's arrival in Egypt in 1883. The result is that the history of the ensuing thirty-five years is much compressed, and is consequently somewhat superficial. The author's qualifications for his task are: a fair mind, diligence, a competent literary style, and (apparently) some personal acquaintance with Egypt as a visitor in the last two or three years. He may possibly have served in Egypt during the war. His disqualifications are: absence of any prolonged and first-hand familiarity with the country; and an external and somewhat amateurish view of political problems. He pays the orthodox homage to the administrative successes of Lord Cromer and his successors; but has no appreciation of the political difficulties or of the success with which Egyptian independence has been nursed into (at any rate) adolescence. He complains, for example, that we have never defined our precise position in the country; but does not realize that it was the absence of definition that enabled us to yield elastically to the growing force of national self-consciousness. This criticism applies with less force to the earlier chapters, where our relations with the French, the Turks, and the Khedive are expounded with lucidity and justice. But in pressing the opinion that instead of exiling Araby Pasha after Tel-el-Kebir, we ought to have taken him to our arms, and used him as our instrument in regenerating the country, he has failed to take account of the political considerations which are forcibly suggested by the complicated situation he has himself expounded. On the whole, the faults of the book are faults of omission rather than commission.

# READER'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

## RECENT SHAKESPEAREAN INVESTIGATION

Concerning latter-day digging and delving, mining and countermining into Shakespeare, the following carefully selected list has been compiled with the view to carrying on the story where Professor C. H. Herford, in his *Sketch of Recent Shakespearean Investigation, 1893-1923*, left it. In the interim, much treasure trove, mingled with not a few alluring and highly deceptive specimens of the sham antique, has been brought to light, and the main task which awaits the future investigator will be one of expert sifting.

### ELUCIDATED TEXTS

*The New Shakespeare.* Edited for the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson.

Eleven volumes in the Folio order have already been issued. Edited on disturbingly original and partly iconoclastic principles, this series is heady wine for all save the three-bottle men of the scholarly world who have taken forethought to 'make their heads'. Other brains will become ready victims to the intoxicating fumes emanating so profusely from Professor Dover Wilson's exegetical genius. They should confine themselves to the small beer of the useful Arden series.

*Facsimiles of Plays from the First Folio.* With introductions and lists of modern readings by J. Dover Wilson. *Faber & Gwyer, Limited.*

In process of publication. Four volumes have been issued. Being reasonably priced, these are highly recommended to all students desirous of going direct to the fountain-head.

*The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke*, 1603.  
With an Introduction by G. B. Harrison. *John Lane*. 1923.

One of the Bodley Head Quartos. A useful reprint of the spurious First Quarto.

*The Text of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet'*, by B. A. P. Van Dam,  
M.D. *John Lane*. 1924.

An important collation of the three texts, together with some inquiry into the origin of the First and Second Quartos.

#### PRIMERS

*Shakespeare: The Man and his Stage*, by E. A. G. Lamborn  
and G. B. Harrison. *Oxford University Press*. 1923.

*About Shakespeare and his Plays*, by G. F. Bradby. *Oxford University Press*. Second revised edition. 1927.

*Shakespeare*, by G. B. Harrison. *Benn's 'Sixpenny Library'*,  
No. 54.

*A Preface to Shakespeare*, by George H. Cowling. *Methuen*.  
1925.

Choice is difficult, but for sheer charm of writing Mr. Bradby bears away the palm.

#### BIOGRAPHICAL

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*Constable*. 1923.

'A well-informed and, on the whole, trustworthy book, intended, perhaps, for a somewhat vague general reader who is not above finding realistic the little romantic commonplaces that must trouble those of us who do not like them.' (Dr. A. W. Reed.)

*A Chapter in the Early Life of Shakespeare*, by Arthur Gray.  
*Cambridge University Press*. 1926.

Attempts to account for a blank period in the poet's youth by postulating that he spent part of his early years as a page at Polesworth Hall in Warwickshire.

*The Shakespeare Mystery*, by George Connes. *Cecil Palmer*. 1927.

A happy recapitulation by a witty French scholar of all the various theories put forward from time to time by sundry half intellects, who, having somehow become imbued with the idea that superlative genius is the prerogative of blue blood, and that Will Shakespeare the player was much too plebeian to have been capable of writing his immortal works, set about plaguing a long-suffering world by instituting a number of highly impossible claimants for the poetic throne. Curiously enough, mere juxtaposition creates a universal cancellation. Heresy kills heresy till nothing but orthodoxy remains.

*Shakespeare: Truth and Tradition*, by John Semple Smart. *Arnold*. 1928.

*How Shakespeare 'Purged' Jonson*, by Arthur Gray. *Cambridge, W. Heffer & Sons*. 1928.

A weakly-argued attempt to show that the purge was given to rare old Ben by Jacques in *As You Like It* (a sinister title in this connexion).

## THE SONNETS

*The Two Dated Sonnets of Shakespeare*, by J. A. Fort. *Oxford University Press*. 1924.

*Shakespeare's Sonette*. Von Dr. Rudolf Fischer. *Wien und Leipzig, W. Braumüller*. 1925.

A book in which the many virtues overshadow the few gross faults. Dr. Fischer ably advocates the necessity for a re-arrangement of the sonnets. On this score, comparison should be made with Samuel Butler's *Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered*, of which a new edition was issued by Mr. Jonathan Cape in 1927.

## THE FIRST FOLIO

*Studies in the First Folio*, by Members of the Shakespeare Association. With an Introduction by Sir Israel Gollancz. *Oxford University Press*. 1925.

*Shakespeare's First Folio*. A Tercentenary Study by R. Crompton Rhodes. *Oxford, Basil Blackwell*. 1923.

## SHAKESPEARE ON THE RESTORATION STAGE

*Shakespeare Adaptations*, by Montague Summers. London, Jonathan Cape. 1922.

Besides a valuable historical introduction, this book gives the texts of the Dryden-Davenant sophistication of *The Tempest*, and of Tate's version of *King Lear*.

*Shakespeare Improved*, by Hazelton Spencer. Harvard University Press. 1927.

An exhaustive survey of Shakespeare on the Restoration Stage, with minute details of the tampering with his texts, and some account of the quasi-Shakespearean quartos published within the period. The record is brought down to 1710.

## SHAKESPEARE'S FIRST EDITORS

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*Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, by D. Nichol Smith. Oxford, The Clarendon Press. 1928.

An admirable little book.

## SHAKESPEARE AND MUSIC

*Shakespeare's Use of Song*, by Richmond Noble. Oxford University Press. 1923.

A pioneer book on a difficult subject, spoken of by experts as an acute and solid contribution to knowledge.

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See pp. 342 ff., essay on 'Some Aspects of Song in the Drama'.

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Chiefly noteworthy for presenting the original, and sometimes later, music of several of Shakespeare's songs.



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*The Elizabethan Stage*, by Sir Edmund K. Chambers. 4 vols. *Oxford, The Clarendon Press*. 1923.

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*The Physical Conditions of the Elizabethan Public Playhouse*, by W. J. Lawrence. London, Humphrey Milford. 1927.

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Contains an illustrated paper on 'Hamlet as Shakespeare staged it'.

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*Shakespeare's Workshop*, by W. J. Lawrence. Oxford, Basil Blackwell. 1928.

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*Shakespearean Representation*, by Percy Fitzgerald. *Eliot Stock*. 1908.

Affords an excellent starting-point for the student of this subject. Mr. Fitzgerald chats agreeably about the traditional methods, now effete, and discusses the revivals of Irving and others. What have we gained since then—and what lost?

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Sir Barry Jackson's theatre was the birthplace (in April 1923) of that ill-favoured, if robustious, bantling, known as 'Shakespeare in Modern Dress', and Mr. Matthews gives details of the painful parturition. Will it survive? Mr. Hubert Griffith pleads for its fostering, but Mr. Granville-Barker sternly bids us turn down the thumb.

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A notable example of the fine research work at present being done by American scholars. The first scientific study of its subject, Professor Baldwin's book has metal rare as radium, mingled with a good deal of specious dross. It will materially help and at the same time temporarily hinder future investigators.

See also Mr. G. B. Harrison's paper on 'Shakespeare's Actors' in the aforementioned *Shakespeare and the Theatre*. (1927). A useful alphabetical list of Elizabethan players is given in Chambers's *The Elizabethan Stage*, Vol II.

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*An Introduction to the Study of the Shakespeare Canon proceeding on the Problem of 'Titus Andronicus'*, by J. M. Robertson. *London, Routledge*. 1924.

Argues that *Titus* was largely the work of Peele, though Greene and Kyd must be credited with much that remains, and Marlowe also had a little finger in the pie. Mr. Robertson opines that Shakespeare's work was confined to a perfunctory revision, 'limited to trimming the speeches, eliding the feeblest matter, "toning up" in respect of continuity, and making the lines scan'.

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*The Shakespeare Canon: Part II*, by J. M. Robertson. Routledge. 1923.

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An elaborate, unconvincing thesis exhaustively reviewed in *The Review of English Studies* for January 1928, p. 100.

# MISCELLANEOUS

*Shaking the Dust from Shakespeare: An Authentic Renovation of 'The Merchant of Venice',* by Harris Jay Griston. *New York, Cosmopolis Press.* 1924.

Argues interestingly that the legal background and general atmosphere of the play is that of the second decade of the fourth century, when the blood bond could have been legally entered into and the complexities arising from it could have naturally taken place.

*Suggestions: Literary Essays,* by E. E. Kellett. *Cambridge University Press.* 1923.

Includes six stimulating papers on Shakespeare.

*The Women in Shakespeare's Plays: A Critical Study from the Dramatic and Psychological Points of View in Relation to the Development of Shakespeare's Art.* London, Heinemann. 1924.

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*Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays*, by Levin L. Schucking. London, Harrap. 1922.

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Outlines a system of teaching Shakespeare in schools.

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A series of interesting lectures on the four great tragedies. But one is puzzled to know how Professor Nicoll arrived at the conclusion that the fair Ophelia was Hamlet's mistress. When Shakespeare the dramatist wanted to convey a thing he generally said it.

*Shakespeare's English*, by George Gordon. S.P.E. Tract No. XXIX. Oxford, The Clarendon Press. 1928.

A masterly pamphlet: seldom does one get so much valuable information in so little space, or conveyed quite so felicitously. Professor Gordon reveals that Shakespeare not only imposed his coinages upon our common language, but was so far commanding in his genius—a benevolent despot—that he had the power to give permanency to his individual interpretation of old vocables.

*The Problems of 'Hamlet'*, by G. F. Bradby. Oxford University Press. 1928.

An engrossing brochure. Mr. Bradby discusses the extraordinary contradictions in the great tragedy, some of which have hitherto passed unobserved, e.g. there are practically two Horatios in the play. Never, perhaps, was there a classic presenting so many flaws.

W. J. LAWRENCE

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T. STURGE MOORE

## THE CLOSING DOOR

*(In Memory of the late Henry Poole, R.A.)*

### I. CLOVEN WANDS

HIERON:

Can it be true, Apollodorus, that thou so admirest my Aphrodite thou wilt have me fill thy scholarly ears with the hard-handed tale of my life—a mere carver of stone, no lord of words like thyself? Truly it behoves me omit everything that seems unimportant when I think of my statue. My youth worshipped two things, our brook's deep bend and the white cliff, and early grieved that the one was from nowhere reflected in the other; for between them grass rolled over mounds with bushes here or there. Yet even as a child the crag always made me think of that smooth mirror; and my boyhood spent many a long afternoon trying to find a station from which the rock would be seen inverted in the water. I had thus viewed at least the summit of all the neighbour trees; yet, though the cliff was no farther off and perhaps the swallows might glimpse it hanging downwards as they swooped above a thorn thicket which I could point out, from nowhere attainable was that white forehead to be observed in the stream's elbow, where the shallow becomes deep, the chatterer silent, and the dishevelled a serene

and limpid dream. I learned to climb on those rent walls and jagged turrets, till the feel of marble was so endeared that I have kissed a lofty stone cheek when warm with the sun. More tardily and only in imitation of bolder companions did I dare to plunge into the remotest secrecy of the pool. When the ripening of my blood began to rule my thoughts I became preoccupied about their nymphs; for naiad and oread must surely haunt such signal and lovely features of the earth! All a night have I lain ambushed in vain. And then Rhoda began lying in wait for me, and when we were plighted she made mock of their divinities, and laughed me out of chilly contemplations into the warm and active satisfactions of her bed. But long before this I had been daily trudging over the shoulder to the quarry to help hew out marble slabs for temple-builders. And returning from a festival at Athens I fell to hoarding spare moments to chip at oddments of stone in a nook out of view. One day Euphranor the sculptor, searching about for a block of a certain size, came on an oread's head that I was well forward with. He demanded who had carved it, and, when they brought me before him asked who had taught me. I confessed that once and again, being for a few days on an errand at Athens, I had loitered my afternoons away in a sculptor's yard; and after handling their chisels and mallets had furnished myself with the like at a forge, and having well noted how they set to work, had learned by bruising and notching my fingers. Then he asked me what master works I had seen and liked best, and I named them, telling where each stood; and he fell silent, for I stammered and tears confused me as I recalled the extreme beauty that the good fortune of some masters had created. He put his arm about me and said that I should be his

son in Apollo and work with him. But Rhoda was very angry; for had I not loitered carving stone lips while she waited fretting for my kisses? 'Of course, such rough hands preferred marble limbs and such hard arms a carved waist! It was fated; thou art more a mason than a man!' I spent my utmost in persuasions, only to learn that though nothing may be softer than a woman's bosom nothing is harder than a visionless will. Not even the riches I felt sure of earning in Athens weighed against her intuition that I loved my art far more than herself and her babe, for she was then plump with one. I was so torn asunder, that I had welcomed madness as a deliverance; but alas! I could not throw myself beside myself and always knew what I said even when I pretended not to, and, betraying my lie, vainly strove to force belief on her that life alone was naught to me. At last sick, fevered and wasted with sleepless nights, like a thief I slipped away in the dawn. Now, though Euphranor was encouraging, as week dragged after week my ribs grew to feel bruised and even raw, so that when in my work my left arm was stretched across to the right the pain waxed intolerable. Nor was my attention stronger but must forever be away home, till I perceived how both my work and my bearing were persuading Euphranor that he had been the dupe of an over-generous appreciation. To divine this stultified my best efforts yet more, till I said to myself: 'Better be an whole quarry-man, than an ailing tyro who can master nothing'. Home I went and there was my heart-ache cauterized; for Rhoda was already wedded to the quarry-master, at very least thirty, and half-bald; I spied him rocking my son on his knee. A sound man tramped back to Athens and had soon retrieved his master's regard. . . . A few years later I became obsessed by the glamour of

deep water, till the forms I carved appeared as shapely vacuities in transparency—as though a bather could leave air in his room and his voided shape hang suspended in a clear and tranquil mould whence no liquid reinvaded it. Every measure I took stretched a spider's line across an empty form, and I saw sectional planes where the impenetrable marble forbade the eye to discover anything. My leisure, too, loved to put forth on calm seas and, gazing down, to conjure human shapes out of the deep, like bubbles stationary in cheese yet most elaborately limbed and moulded; and when I returned, had some god put his rod into my hand, I could have touched my master's best pieces to change them into glass, that I might see the inwards of the shoulders through the breast. Before long, appalled at the fate which possessed me and coursed for ever after this haggard fancy, I sought counsel from a pupil of Aristoteles, who understood the nature of the soul and was deeply versed in those forms of speech which convince others of their truth. He told me that if adamant were hard, idea was harder; that numbers and geometric figures cannot be contaminated either by contact or event. Little by little, time and weather degrade the surface of even the most durable stones; but a tetrahedron, as the mind pictured it, would be the same after centuries had tried to corrode it. His wisdom unbewitched me of dotage on clear still water, since I recognized how elaborate bodies became easier to figure swathed universally in liquid, than in the impalpable air. About this time I received the commission to carve Aphrodite for the town of Tegea, so would hire famous hetaerae, that, after studying their various figures, I might conceive one yet more perfect. My soul had shunned desire for so long, that I watched them as one

might living statues, and laughed when they at times would win from me more virile attention. At last Amydone, whose beauty thou thyself hast adored, stood before me, and I felt it imperative that she should live in my workshop that I might refer every chance conception to the correction of her perfect proportions. Nor had she been about me many days when I gave her what I had refused the others, and would sleep in the arms I had measured and moved as though they were my thoughts instead of her limbs. Now both my life and my work wanted for nothing, and neither day nor night left room for a single sigh. Indeed, I besought her to perpetuate this elysium and become my wife, but she, having been brought up in a noble college, felt bound by its rules and demurred. In vain I instanced Aspasia who wed with Pericles, Dione with Parrhasios, and other celebrities. On this point alone I could make no way in her thoughts, but perceived always a door so closing as to refuse entrance without offence. One forenoon my hammer and chisel were stayed while my abstraction contrasted live forms with geometrical; feeling after a harmony between them, my aim was to confer on the infinite changefulness of these some kinship with the defined precision of those, till they took on a character that, while charged with the ardour of life, might still assert itself for stone and not merely counterfeit flesh. My gaze was riveted on her breast and shoulder, but I was probing through rather than scanning their forms. Suddenly they shook, and, lifting my eyes, I perceived that she had much ado not to laugh at me, which, when our eyes met, she did. Nor was I at all offended but joined in. Then, with engaging humility, she told me that she knew not whether she loved me better when I gave her consideration or forgot her

completely, and that my capacity to pass from the one state to the other without confusion made life with me as amusing as a rhapsodist's narration, in which the captivating naturalness of one incident should always be replaced by as gracious likelihood in one totally contrasted. I questioned her, and thence began to note a mind as beautiful as the body and temper I had hitherto worshipped. In her talk men whom I knew well or slightly became transparent, so that I read their motives and the excellences of intention behind the commonness of frustration, and was very apt henceforward to neglect my work rather than the revealing anecdotes and comments with which her conversation was fruitful. Now was first fully realized what had been supposed familiar knowledge, namely, that this woman must have been devoutly loved by many. I would beg her to discourse on those former lovers, and lead her on with questions, till I perceived that she only needed a suitable substance in which to carve in order to become a sculptor of men's characters even as I was of their bodies. And in solitude, when I rehearsed to myself the varieties of moral structure her memory had stored, I was ready to call her a master. At last she told me of one lover who I perceived might have been even dearer than myself; he was a poet—thou knowest thine own name, and this is what she told me of thee. . . .

APOLLODORUS:

Nay, dear Hieron, thou hast spoken long enough, and it is fairly my turn. Do thou sip thy still brimming cantharos wherein, as the wine becomes shallower, thou wilt gradually discover a girl wading from the sea while she wrings the water from her hair. Though just any young

fellow's cuddle, she will nevertheless for a moment succeed in reminding thee of the Anadyomene of Apelles, so cleverly has the potter limned her. In the meanwhile I will go back to childhood and, in imitation of thee, fetch thence the story of my talent to this library where, safe from intrusion, we sit among scrolls in which sleep the voices and thoughts of the choicest dead.

Thou hast read and heard but little poetry and may not understand how the love of words can rival that of marble . . . but already I mislead thee. . . . Those who indulge preferences among words are poor poets. Yet do not think it is the thoughts we prize; he who seeks wisdom in verse will be easily satisfied with wretched lines. Words are like the leaves which fledge a tree, till in completing its broad magnificence against the sky, each has aided its fellows and become indistinguishable among them. Thence the beauty of sound sequences and their congruent thoughts distils into the mind and penetrates every tissue of the body, like the attraction of a woman or the glow of good wine. Strophes are like thy water-dreams, diaphanous bubbles yet perfectly limbed. . . . though their element be sound not water, not the ocean of noise that is music's range, no, syllable following syllable flows on like some deep clear brook meandering. . . . Poems traverse memory, linked tones and meanings re-collecting love. . . . Shut the eyes when listening to or recalling poems! Stir not a finger, the interruption may be fatal! . . . Banish every thought: those who are shaping their own cannot entertain a rhapsodist's. . . . Alas! I am tedious, already vacuity glazes thine eyes. . . . Pray, no excuse; the fault was mine.

Now imagine an island on the horizon like the outline of a woman's breast thrust up out of the sea. On its very

summit a golden bead winks at the sun. In the morning the island is blue, at noon moulded and fractured with cast shadows, but soon flat like a wall with mist; anon crimson against the twilit east, then hard-edged and black before the rising moon. No other object is so often stared at by a certain fisher clan, and in early years my eyes rested on none more frequently. Hung like a precious stone on a thread beside the nipple of that giant breast was the temple of Aphrodite with its far-famed golden tiles. There she dwelt beautiful, naked, kind and capricious—forever just back from the sea, with limbs still moist or else a-sparkle with salt! She owned marvellous raiment hung against the walls ready for a never really imagined occasion, since her worshippers always found her considerably naked. Her will lived in every gentle breeze and encouraged every blossoming orchard, re-plumed birds and refreshed the lustre of butterflies; and she melted my tiny heart with a goodness only approached by my mother's, an atmosphere of favour in which happiness opened like a rose. To her did I croon my first prayer, to her did I rehearse all I heard; for, far away, she was nearer than any, unseen, divinely radiant. My boyhood was busy with boats and won instruction from sailors, who kissed the tips of their fingers toward that island whenever they forestalled good fortune in unwary speech, as hope is ever fond to, or gratefully recounted luck she had bestowed. I too blew her kisses, for I too had luck when a wand was set up and bow after bow was drawn. For a first time, and then more and more frequently, my arrow split the slim white target. The other feathers quivered beyond like a pigmy fishing fleet anchored on the dune. Praised, and proud of praise, my feat came to me so easily that I grew to scorn such in-



cautious acclamation. Having everything, I still wanted something. . . . My mother, the master who had taught me to read and write, the sailors even, left half my questions unanswered save by puzzled and fatuous smiles. Fool! All whom I met were my friends. I loved and was loved, yet I pined. I knew and was known, yet grew solitary, separate, incommunicable, like a prowling wolf. I visited her temple, but beheld marble not flesh, and yearned to touch not art but life, not life but thought, not thought but ecstasy. I shunned the kindly daughters of men whose uninquisitive minds, satisfied with any rubbish, depress conversation. So the bodies I might have fondled I would not; all that was common and easy evoked a disapprobation, which found no fellow in the eyes that admired me. Like Narcissus I stooped over well or pool till real tears dispersed the reflected image. Here was not there; and when I came thither, elsewhere alone could comfort me. Milto was not Oenone, Oenone fell short of Aglaura. Nothing and no one was mine, nor was I mine own. An alien, in this body, neglected its powers and yearned for invisibility, or to pass like light through the air. So reckless I became that with a shallow purse I sailed to a strange port where I must starve or slave for the wherewithal to pay a return passage: yet found even that desperation a sham, for many a captain would credit me, sure that my friends would gladly redeem my debt. So I went farther and farther on foot, till, ragged and dirty, no man cared how soon I died. At last, having drained mine eyes of tears, and my soul of despite, I set to work to win first food, then clothes, then consideration. Though my archery opened me several doors, yet often I was ill-treated or cozened, and once even cast into jail; yet I waxed cheerful, for everything I gained I knew the

worth of; sunshine in winter and shade in summer satisfied me as they do the dogs. Coarse food and drink in taverns daily tasted better than rare feasts had once done. And the permission to unroll a book was more prized than the chest full of scrolls in my mother's house. For at last I worshipped Aphrodite, not only in temples, not in statues merely, not even chiefly in the bodies of women, but in idea, where the relish that is her power is as azure to the distance, and bathes the common day's length as dew silvers the dawn. Tremendous and unattainable in idea she looms like the summit of a mountain waded far out to sea. Holy, venerable and inalterable! There that which is softest is hardest of all, for the conception which is most gracious takes the highest finish whether in sculpture or in verse, and the heart which is most lavish tastes the greatest freedom that the spirit can conceive.

When at length I returned, home would have been Elysium had not my mother lain dying in slow torture, had not Milto been married, had not my old school-master lost all hold on time, so that he forgot what had just been told him yet remembered my silly questions of ten years before. Though now I had rational griefs and sorrows, a divine comforter, the Muse, waited for me the moment I was alone. She disparaged to-day what she had praised yesterday, and was hard to content; but her attraction made every new start on a yet more difficult task worth no end of pains. At length I received praise not only from inferiors but from my peers, and finally was welcomed at Athens.

HIERON:

And Amymone hopes thou wilt marry her and therefore puts me off.

APOLLODORUS:

Nay, she would not be estranged from either, and therefore refuses both.

HIERON:

And possibly . . . that will suit us both?

APOLLODORUS:

This time, I believe *thine* arrow has cloven the wand!

And now let us go and heal the divided heart of Amymone.

## II. REVEALING NIGHT

HIERON:

Art thou still asleep, Amymone?

AMYMONE:

Nay, darling, I have been awake some little while.

HIERON:

Then I will just shift my arm which has the pins and needles.

AMYMONE:

Put thyself wholly at ease, my love. . . . Hieron, it must be fully four months since I conceived, and so in a few weeks I shall have to retire to our college, as it is an absolute rule of our order to take every precaution at this period; so I shall remain away till after our child is weaned. I

was barely more than a girl when my Chloe was born, who is grown almost sage enough to make me a little friend. Ah, I have felt the need of immersion in those primary, almost animal, preoccupations welling strongly through me for a year past! I shall rejoice to be far from men and towns with those dear witty old ladies once more, amid the children and all the farm life, with the young girls coming in from their training camp now and again. Both the sea and the hills are next neighbours to right and to left and life is unbelievably sweet and gentle there, and gay too, gay like a wild flower.

HIERON:

Alas, beloved vision, what shall I do till thou returnest?

AMYMONE:

That is what I want thee to understand and be prepared for. Thou knowest that when a man or woman is in love Aphrodite has decreed that the mind shall blossom with the body, nay even, that the whole of both their souls shall wax stronger and more enterprising and better able to conceive perfections whether of art or of behaviour. But after the child is born, or the work of art completed, or the accomplishment acquired, Nature retreats and reposes. We have been lovers, my Hieron, we shall have had a full two years of spring and summer; so when I return the season of fruits will be over, the harvest in grange, and the white, clear, cold but radiant winter will reign. That is if thou wilt consent and not, like Apollodorus, refuse to follow the kindly ordered seasons in their turn. Poor innocent, he had even persuaded thee that I might be halved like a pear, or shared like a dish of comfits! Thy face looked as though it had just parted

from a ghost, and all because I had refused to see him! And truly, I too would fain have remained his friend, and often felt how much we were losing in that we were unable to ask him in to pass an evening; for his mind is a very treasure house, and he divines the deeper meanings of Aphrodite better than either of us. Besides he is often inspired not only when the stylus is in his hand, but when he is talking to those whom he trusts. Yet with all this, there is a childish frowardness in him: just as he speaks too much and too often about himself, so he will have his own way, reason or none; at such times the destructive mood grips him, and he becomes a gulf of impiety, and bends his frown against the goddess, would even hurl her from her pedestal, ransack her temple, the heart, and leave it vacant like a cave for bears to whelp in. I hate such talk that like a dog will nose every offence and turn every poignant mystery into a blind jest, that envisages no future and would deride any that it might seem to presuppose. Nay, nay, kiss me not, for I boil against such unbridled wits the more, the more opulent they may be in other respects! They need to be sent back to the nursery, that their correction may have the indignity of the fault.

HIERON:

How impossible, O my choicest, for me to forecast a life without thee, thou mirror from whose impenetrable depth perfection draws near! I shall even become, if left unaided, such a blind jest as disgusts thee.

AMYMONE:

Hush, darling! such thoughts have no eyes, and when uttered increase the darkness that gave them birth. Dost

thou know why I came to thee? Euphranor, like a wise physician, prescribed me for thine art. He came to me and said: 'Thou art a true daughter of Diotima the Mantinean, and hast not sold thyself to riches; thou dardest still love a poor man. The work of Hieron, my pupil, is horribly dry, and it is all the fault of some silly wench in the country whom he espoused and who cut him like a knife by jilting him for a wealthier man. His heart shrank in healing and is all cockled like an old piece of leather; so the lavishness of grace mocks his chisel. Now it depends on thee, Amy, to bathe him in bliss and gently restore his heart's action that his eyes may dilate and his hand acquire a suppleness worthy of his devotion. A hard job I am giving thee, Amy, but I know how much thou meantest to me and to Delphis, and others. Thou art, perhaps, the one solitary woman who can change this cub into a master sculptor.' Euphranor is a very dear friend of mine; he understood of nature that the loveliest relations, if they are to grow, must change their character. I had no trouble with him. His is a great soul: though his mind seem simpler than a man's need be, when one compares him with Apollodorus.

HIERON:

What new statue can I conceive if I am to be deprived of thy stimulus, O my Vision?

AMYMONE:

Euphranor, when he last came here, three days ago, whispered to me: 'This Corinth statue improves immeasurably on that of Tegea. Thy work is done; I hope thou art soon leaving him, or he will become enervated. He should now do an Apollo or an Athlete or something

to tax the tougher side of his nature. He has had enough kisses.'

HIERON:

Fancy Euphranor being so much in thought for me. . . !

AMYMONE:

For thine art, Hieron. I doubt if he cares what may happen to thee, save as it may affect thine art, or to me either save as I may help sculptors and architects. And if my body come safely through the dangers of childbirth once more, as with such dear and wise midwives as I shall have there is every hope it may. . . . Hieron, my own, not only must thine art attempt a new and more disciplined task, but I too must go on to embrace yet other minds and help them to flower, so as to gather honey afresh, when they open. This is the great privilege of our order that is dedicated to the ethereal Eros and the ultimate Aphrodite.

HIERON:

May she grant me all her celestial encouragements or I shall fail thee as yonder poet did.

AMYMONE:

Thou thyself art my poet, Hieron; and perhaps a better one than Apollodorus, though thou hast none of his skill with dactyls and spondees and strophe and antistrophe. Thou hast bathed my thought in many new similes and opened up deep imaginations before me. And I would try to tell thee how one of the predilections of thy spirit, which haunted thee from boyhood, may perhaps be applied to that which Aphrodite and Euphranor now require of thee. Is not every soul a bath, prepared as a

home for reflections, such as thou didst devise for thine Aphrodite, planting her plinth in the midst of a pool?—and, at Corinth, almost submerging it so that those who approach the basin shall see her toe to top in the bath? Thou hast often showed me how water adds both mystery and a crystal envelope to the appearance that travels down into it, making it yet nearer idea than art could. Ah, so! though more comprehensively would I dwell in thy mind! Have not we, in mutual gentleness, been carving a statue for which our future separated souls may be twin haunts? Though each reflection must in many ways be the opposite of our love, that most distant which was nearest, even as in water that is lowest which was highest; yet both may none the less surpass the original. Indeed! Where is an inverted image located? not palpably in the pool like a bather, nor even like those human bubbles that thou wast wont to imagine, into which no liquid trespassed? Though in no sense tangibly there, is it therefore less real? . . . a less inalienable part of all that is? or of our experience? Thou callest me thy Vision, O my dearest: were not my reflection a yet more perfect vision, and thy loving memory a stiller and more limpid mirror?

HIERON:

But in a reflection thou art upside down, my love.

AMYMONE:

Where no body is, has that any importance? Nearness to the soul is marked by freedom from material disadvantages. We ourselves can only stand on our heads by a grotesque muscular strain and at the expense of a crimson face and congested neck, whereas a reflection is subject to no such distortion. A vision in very deed, it retains ele-



gance. May not Memory enclose our love in as propitious a polish, as miraculous an immunity from the untoward frustrations of active life? Now, harmonized with this deep familiarity in idea, shall I not refind a faithful friend in Hieron, where I left a still greedy lover, a comrade who, asking nothing physical, will be only anxious to revivify and immortalize memory's great treasure? I shall bathe in him a vision that disturbs nothing, and his consummate stillness will bathe in mine. And both in the supreme Aphrodite be given and received without convulsed features, or crushed limbs or bodily spasm. One, and two, and three; I grudge thee no kisses yet awhile. So now let us sleep that our dreams may continue the tranquil limpidity of these tender thoughts.

ARNOLD BENNETT

## FROM A FRENCH JOURNAL

*[Continued from last issue]**29th July 1907*

Yesterday morning I spent one hour and a half in writing four lines of a poem which I had begun to sketch out on the previous day. And then another three-quarters of an hour in drafting four more lines. At this rate I should take six weeks to do a short poem. The concentration which verse demands is terrible. In spite of the fact that friends have come on a visit from London and are staying in the house, and we have an immense deal to say to each other, in spite of the fact that I have various other urgent compositions actively in hand, not to mention the incessant brewing of my novel, everything, in the secrecy of my mind, seems to be secondary to this accursed poem. I think I only turned to poetry because some time ago Arthur Hooley told me with his calm, benevolent malice that he did not believe I was capable of writing poetry. I have thought a lot about Goethe's remarks copied out above. Of course, Goethe is talking of verse, not prose. I should say that what he says is far truer of verse than of prose. Anyhow, the composition of even a short poem is sufficient practically to monopolize my sensitivity. Fred Marriott said that yesterday was the hottest day he ever remembered. It ought to have been. In the afternoon I practised several formal 'hands' for my novel. Marriott is an expert in calligraphy, and he watched over me.

After dinner we all walked by the Seine, and then up

the escarpment to the village of By, where there is a fête—on the edge of the forest near to Rosa Bonheur's house. When we reached the fête-field—at 9.10—not a soul! Certainly not more than ten *fêtards* on the whole field. Hobby-horses, shooting-galleries, spice-stalls, all stood as if enchanted on the grass under their oil-lamps. The dancing-tent was being lighted up. The small bandstand in the middle of it was empty. The manager of the tent and his wife were slowly and gloomily putting the lamps into the thirty brass chandeliers, from one of which hung a card bearing the work 'Mazurka'. A waiter with a napkin round his neck, and a boy-waiter, stood chatting with some friends at a trestle-table in the café part of the tent. I spoke to them. The waiter turned, glanced nonchalantly at us, and resumed his chatting. We sat down at a table just outside the tent and after a time the boy came and served us. Two or three people wandered up, peeped into the tent and left again. Then a whole family arrived and sat down and ordered beer and lemonade, and some of us were much shocked to see the mother of the family insist on her little boy, aged five or six, drinking a mixture of the two. Two young girls, with bows in their hair, attendants at a shooting-gallery, ran skipping and leaping into the tent, and then back to their business. A few more would-be revellers appeared and made remarks about the emptiness and deadness of the tent, and departed. However, one or two stayed. Then the hobby-horses began to make music. They began to revolve, very slowly. Half hidden in the middle of the roundabout, a white horse was dragging the machine round; and a man standing on the revolving platform held the horse's bridle with his left hand and turned the organ with his right. The entire affair of the fête was

imprisoned in a sort of sinister, insane enchantment. There was no sense in it.

What a mistake for a tyro to choose a stanza consisting of three seven-syllabled lines and a fourth line of three syllables! No room to move about in these excessively short lines. You can't waste a syllable. It was a magnificent night. The courtyards and front-rooms of By seemed to be all occupied by families drinking wine at oil-lit tables; but the village streets were lighted by electricity. We passed out of the village by the fringe of the forest, over the railway, whose signals burned, waiting for distant trains. The moon rose exactly like a tremendous, very yellow Chinese lantern. Over the unseen cauldron of my poem Marriott and I exchanged jokes in the old Chelsea manner, some of them rather good. When we got home he sang 'Come into the garden, Maud'. This poem is magical, a million times better than the music. Tennyson could write, and he never wasted a syllable. And he could write erotic poetry. See 'Fatima'. Also he could write very good prose. . . . The convincingness of fiction on certain minds! Reading a novel, Marriott, if it threatens to end sadly, will not finish it. Nor will he allow any one to tell him what the end is! This is what I call a real tribute to novelists.

*1st August 1907*

It is strange how every man considers that members of his own profession are the most curious and abnormal of human beings. Marriott told me yesterday of the greed of painters, evidently with a notion at the back of his mind that painters are specially greedy. He related how one well-known artist, when the fish came round at a continental table d'hôte, would help himself to two

whole soles, quite regardless of the rest of the company. Anyhow, this man is a brave man and knows what he wants. Another artist, still better known, when he saw a dish travelling from person to person, would cry aloud, and seriously, his fears that not enough would be left for himself. On the other hand, when the round began with him, he would take so much that the waiters, perceiving his greed, would so arrange the round at the next meal as to serve him last. Good stories; but I have witnessed scenes in small hotels and large boarding-houses—especially continental—to beat anything that Marriott could relate. On the faces of respectable and independent ladies expressions of greed that amounted to savagery, and a power of determination to satisfy themselves that, if it had been otherwise directed, might have put them on thrones in dominion over entire peoples! Yes, battles of ferocity about the remains of a pot of marmalade. There is always something heroical in a really greedy person; and for ruthlessness greed can stand level with amorous lust and avarice. Great and naughty passions, all of them, and worthy to be respected for their grandeur.

*2nd August 1907*

I walked slowly for two and a half hours yesterday in the forest, trying to finish my poem. It rained about half the time. By good luck I did finish it. But I was so tired in the evening that I could hardly keep awake. My verse was arousing jealousy, which I had to soothe. I have now written four poems. I read them all to the company; they seemed to make a considerable effect, and I ingenuously felt flattered.

[The poem finished in the forest was 'A Love Affair'. It appeared, I think, in the *English Review*. Some writers

assure me that what they produce they produce with blood and tears. I did not produce 'A Love Affair' with blood, and I did not produce it with tears. But it cost me so much in time, stress, and fatigue, that I was nearly cured of the verse-habit. The price I paid for it was too high. I sent 'A Love Affair' to Arthur Hooley, and asked him whether it was a real poem. He maliciously replied: 'Yes, but the question is, could you do it again?']

*3rd August 1907*

Yesterday I completed the full draft of Act II of *Cupid and Commonsense*, being thus one day in advance of my programme. I have not yet spent on it, in any one morning, more than an hour and a half. The fact is that nearly all the creative, imaginative work on it seemed to me to be already done. It was done years ago when I finished *Anna of the Five Towns*, before I started the play. Plays need less emotional expenditure than novels, because much of the creation must be left to the actors. And a play adapted from a book, if it is at all a close adaptation, needs the very minimum of emotional expenditure. You cannot create the same thing twice over; and the result would be a botch if you could. . . . In the evening I had a letter from my agent enclosing an unsatisfactory contract for a serial. It means a loss of income when I particularly want and need income. Coincidence or not, I have been daily with diligence absorbing Epictetus of late, and the sad news did not disturb me for more than a few minutes!

*4th August 1907*

I had a quarrel yesterday with Madame Lecoq, the landlady of the little inn or hotel across the road where we take lunch and dinner. M. Lecoq is a huge, jolly man

who gives himself up to sport and leaves the hotel to his wife. Mme. Lecoq knows the world and shrinks before no aspect of it. Hence she is worthy to converse with a novelist and playwright. But her temperament is vivacious, and we quarrelled about food. The food, however, is usually good. If I am to quarrel, I must say I rather like quarrelling in French. It enables me to display my 'colloquacity' in French. '*La ferme*', I said to her in parting: at which she was very annoyed, and justifiably. What annoyed *me* was that Epictetus had been utterly useless in this affair. . . . Marriott always has interesting and instructive tales about charwomen and such. On leaving home once they left their puppy in charge of the charwoman, who has a baby. Fearing that the puppy's milk might go to the baby they gave the woman enough money to provide milk for both the baby and the puppy. When they returned they found the puppy filled out positively like a ball; he was so fat he could scarcely play. But the next day he was very thin. This charwoman had starved him till the end of the holiday, and then, in the attempt to hide her sin, had given him just one unlimited meal. The charwoman would relate how her baby was always so ill that it never did anything but lie on its back all day. One day she came crying, and said: 'I've burnt my baby! I've burnt my baby!' Her tale was that she had left a lighted candle near the child, who had upset it and got badly burnt. The child survived for a week, and then died. Inquest. No charge was brought against her, but when a friend of Marriott's called on her to engage her for some job or other, she had a 'turn' and could not help exclaiming: 'I beg your pardon, but at first I thought you was a policeman come about my baby.' She had had three children, and all of them had died by 'accident'. No one

who knew her doubted her guilt. . . . Another story of a father who was tremendously upset when his first baby died; he seemed also to have a strong feeling against the mother, and thought, perhaps subconsciously, that she ought to be punished. Anyhow, he would not allow the corpse to be moved out of the bedroom, where the mother still lay ill. He insisted on the coffin being brought into the bedroom and screwed up there, and—as the mother said afterwards—‘Every turn of the screwdriver shook my bed’. This baby stuff ought to be used in *The Old Wives’ Tale*; it is fundamental stuff.

*5th August 1907*

Another piece about children. Nora, aged eight or nine, the daughter of friends of mine and the youngest of about seven, the eldest being now twenty-three, has such a nature that all her elders look up to her. She is always reading. But quite apart from this, with her sweetness of character and her precocity, she is a moral authority in the household. At the family meals, if her mother makes a statement which seems to need confirmation, she will turn instinctively to the youngest: ‘Isn’t it, Nora?’ This is charming, it is touching, and I suppose it uplifts. There is something noble about it. The public would love it in a novel. If I put plenty of it in a novel, the success of the novel among serious people would be assured. What the people would not see is the splendour of the other two stories previously recorded: the terrific power of the instinct which forced the mother to kill child after child, despite all the risks of detection; the mysteriousness of the instinct to destroy; and the determination to be rid of the children at any cost; and, in the case of the father, the terrific power of the instinct of revenge on the mother,



fed by his intense grief at the loss of the child. These things are heroic: but they do not seem to fit into the mood of *The Old Wives' Tale* as it lies in my mind at present. However, if an author is sufficiently keen on any given material, he will manage somehow to bring it into any given story.

7th August 1907

Yesterday I finished the draft of Act III of my Five Towns play, and bicycled thirty kilometres before dinner. This play seems to me to be extremely true, and I can scarcely imagine it being acted, well, without making a sensation. *Quelle couche!*

9th August 1907

By giving half an hour a day to it I am slowly getting through d'Annunzio's *Il Piacere*. I could read it without a dictionary as well as I read Daudet's *Fromont Jeune et Risler Aîné* seventeen or eighteen years ago. This latter was the first foreign book I ever read without a dictionary. The pride in first being able to make sense of a foreign book without a dictionary is similar to the pride of being able to keep oneself afloat in water for the first time. I shall never forget the satisfaction of arriving buoyant at the other end of the public swimming-bath at Hanley. And I shall never forget the satisfaction of comprehending Daudet in French. But I am not reading *Il Piacere* without a dictionary. I am learning Italian far more conscientiously than I ever learnt French. When staying at San Remo I had a Berlitz professor in my hotel-bedroom at 8 a.m. daily for one hour. This marvellous energy and application lasted only for a few weeks, but long enough to give me a start. Besides Italian I learnt quite a lot

about the economic situation of Berlitz professors. What strikes me about *Il Piacere* is (a) the extraordinary narrowness of 'the observing outlook', (b) the thinness of the texture, (c) the obvious fact that the larger part of the book is nothing but poetized and sentimentalized autobiography. Occasionally a description is good, but the whole affair seems to me to be much too facile and slender. I used to admire d'Annunzio. When I was on the *Academy* I used to praise him in sentences modelled on (the English translation of) his own. I do not think I admire him now. I do not think he will live. He is not satisfying. English novels are broader in outlook than French or Italian. (There are no German novels worth talking about, and Russian novels are so out of sight superior to all the rest that they cannot fairly be brought into the comparison.) When I say that English novels are 'broader in outlook' I mean that they deal with a larger number of different categories of facts. (I except Balzac, who was interested in nearly every category and who taught us all, from George Moore onwards.) In English fiction the modelling is rounder. (How I hate all these attempts to explain one art in terms of another!) D'Annunzio is only interested in about three categories—landscape, plastic beauty, sexual passion. He could no more see the romantic beauty of a bankruptcy court than he could write the *Convito*. His mind is imprisoned in his ignorance of the world; his conception of the world is childish and inadequate. What is more, he has almost no real nobility. Nobility is what I am after.

9th August 1907

Yesterday morning I rode over to Montigny to witness the arrival of the Thirty-second Regiment of artillery. The

smallest market I ever saw was in progress there; it consisted of two cabbages and three women. Those cabbages would be sold, and an infinitesimal profit—but a profit—would be made. No doubt some of the marketing was already over, and the two cabbages were only the remains of a larger body of goods. Even so, why did the women remain? They were spending time for which the profit could not possibly recoup them. They remained because they might as well. They saw nothing but the prospect of a few sous, but the sous would be positive, genuine, unquestionable, and so they waited for the sous, ignoring all other aspects of the economics of the affair. French! A few soldiers on bicycles had already arrived, and the number '32' seemed already to permeate the little place. '32' had taken on the identifying, individualizing qualities of a name and had ceased to be a number: like 'Fifth' in New York. I sat down on a stone in the shadow of the railway viaduct and read the *Daily Mail*, while the waiting cyclist-soldiers lounged to and fro smoking cigarettes. In half an hour a company marched in with a gun. There was dust on the men's eyelids, but they did not appear to be tired. Yet they had risen at 4.40 at Malesherbes and covered the twenty-five kilometres to Montigny by 9.30. A few minutes later I found my friend Dr. Bouteron in the square, where various regimental vehicles had been drawn up, assigning billets to the men. He was military, but in a very bland, urbane, benevolent way. In the afternoon he came to Les Sablons in white ducks for tea, and explained the finance of his service. He is a doctor in general practice in Paris; but every two years he does a month in the army. His pay is £9 for the month. He is out of pocket on it because he has to feed himself, and provide harness for his horse and uniform for himself. He

said that in the present mood of the French War Office the design of uniforms was changed every two years. He had no grievance. He did not object either to submitting to discipline or to imposing discipline, nor to the considerable monetary loss. The month was a holiday for him. I think he regarded the French army as an organism from everlasting to everlasting, like a hill or a stream. He took it as it was and got the best out of it. If invisible autocrats issued ukases which involved him in the expense of a new uniform each time he served, well they did! France!

*10th August 1907*

At last I think I have evolved a fairly sound formal 'hand', based on good calligraphic traditions, for my novel. I wrote a letter in it yesterday and showed it to Marriott to criticize; he found no fault with it at all; indeed, he was very complimentary. He said that if I wrote a whole long book in it, maintaining the standard, it would be unique in the modern world. I had the idea of doing the page in double columns, but he dissuaded me. Now that the thing is settled I want to begin the novel at once—example of the craftsman in a man trying to get the better of the artist. I can see the book written, and even bound by Bagguley of Newcastle-under-Lyme; and how beautiful it will be! But the thought of the labour of it frightens me at moments terribly; and I wonder whether I shall have the guts to go through with it. My father used always to be talking to us children about the importance of a 'sustained effort'. It was one of his phrases, like the exasperating, 'You'll know better one day, and then you'll thank me'. It is within the mark to say that to write this projected enormous novel in this hand will amount to a sustained effort. . . . Yesterday I

seemed to pass an entirely satisfactory day: 'Italian', piano, my Five Towns play, fine calligraphy, excursion, hearty meals, good wine, and at night reading my own short stories to friends who laughed continually, as people are entitled to laugh at such stories. Also I had news of the sale of *The Ghost* in Germany—not that the sale of that book gave me much pleasure. Still, even *it* increases one internationally: such is the thought that sustains me when I think of the book's inefficiency.

*The Ghost* was built on a great sensational spiritual idea—no doubt a very old one, but I thought of it for myself! I can remember to this day the excitement I felt when it formed itself in my mind. The mischief was that I lacked the skill to develop it and handle it. I frittered the lovely thing away through sheer ignorance of the technique of development. God has no right to entrust these wonderful notions to beginners. If He had withheld it for twenty years, even fifteen, I might have exploited it properly, and the result would have wiped out of existence *The Grand Babylon Hotel* and its mechanical ingenuities and surface glitter. The matter with *The Grand Babylon Hotel* is that it has no theme. *The Ghost* has a theme. It might have made a serial upon which the publicity experts of a magazine editor would have lavished whole strings of bright, new adjectives, and at which the serious could not have scoffed. I ruined it, and yet now if one of my books sells the reason is that the author wrote *The Grand Babylon Hotel*.

12th August 1907

On Saturday morning I finished the principal writing of *Cupid and Commonsense*. All the hard work of it is done.

There have been no sensational events in the com-

position of this play. The top of my head never blew off, and I never once wondered what in heaven's name I should do when I got to this point or that. I think it is a better thing—especially in the last act—than the parent novel (*Anna of the Five Towns*). If I had thought of the new end when I was writing the novel I should certainly have used it, for it is much truer to life, in its malicious irony, than the death and renunciation which end *Anna*. Such deaths simply do not occur, and no such death would have occurred in *Anna* if I had not suffered from auto-intoxication as the book proceeded. I can remember being quite drunk with my own creative emotion.

A friend of mine was reminiscing to me yesterday about the life of his family when he was young; and everything he said was first-rate material for the kind of fiction to which my new novel belongs. These souvenirs ought to be recorded verbatim by an unseen and unsuspected shorthand-writer. Not a word should be missed, for you never know what word, afterwards, will turn out to be valuable. Memory is no good, unless you happen to be a master of mnemonics, in which case your novel would be worthless, if not positively noxious to the enlightened. How his mother (whom he hasn't seen for twenty-three years) had several phrases in constant use; one was, 'Upon my word, I'm tired before my day's work is *begun*'. (Emphasis on the last word.) She would say this usually before seven o'clock in the morning. How brother Ben broke his arm three times in climbing the same forbidden wall, and how at the third breaking his father thrashed him first and then sent for the doctor. How brother Frank when a baby lay for a week between life and death with brain-fever, and was ultimately saved by the formation of an abscess, of which he still bears the mark on

the back of his head, and how the doctor's accounts of the singularity of the illness were printed in the *Lancet*, to the great and everlasting glory of the whole family. How the said doctor was a brother of Captain Webb, the celebrated Channel swimmer, who came from Coalbrookdale, and how my friend helped to drag Captain Webb's carriage from somewhere to somewhere in Coalbrookdale, and how there was a perfect craze and rage for swimming in Coalbrookdale after the Channel feat. How my friend and his eight brothers and sisters were not allowed to eat with their parents, being too numerous, but sat in a row at a long school-desk which their father had picked up cheap. And finally how Will (or was it Sam?) died, and the pennies were put on his eyes, and my friend ran a mile and a half to tell his grandmother, and the grandmother came and stooped to kiss the corpse, and then suddenly cried: 'Brandy! Quick!' She had seen a movement of the tongue. And how Will (or Sam) is alive to this day, and a parent. There is the breath of life in even the bare skeleton of this stuff as I have written it; sufficient to vitalize many pages. Nobody could invent it.

*13th August 1907*

It was a near thing yesterday afternoon whether I should yield to the charms of cycling in companionship, or to the infernal attraction of composing more verse. The infernal attraction won. I went off down to the banks of the Seine, and composed ten lines, while men caught fish from punts, and uncaught fish jumped, and women crossed in the ferry, their coloured blouses reflected in the water, and a tug struggled upstream with five barges. (I was nearly calling that tug 'fussy', which is a detestable

cliché of vast popularity. I have never called a tug 'fussy' and I never shall.) The clock at Champagne struck six when I strolled home in the strong sunshine, striving vainly to find a rhyme to 'faith' other than 'wraith'. The poem will be entitled 'Town and Country' and is a great lark and poets will think naught of it.

[Part of 'Town and Country' appeared in the *English Review*. Part of it had to be sacrificed as commonplace and negligible.]

14th August 1907

After two days' work on the final writing of *Cupid and Commonsense* I now perceive that it means more labour than I anticipated. There are probably a few hundred tiny clumsinesses and such things that have to be remedied. It will be a great strain to finish it off at the rate of two acts a week. I gave nearly four hours of concentrated desk-work to it yesterday, and over three hours to-day, rising before six o'clock. Some months ago I seemed to detect a very slight temporary deterioration of my eyesight. Then I noticed nothing. To-day I was conscious of a certain uneasiness in the eyes. Several times there was a mist before my eyes, which I can clear by a strong effort of the will, but which returns. There is a mist before them now. Is this the end of my hitherto magnificent eyesight, or is it merely a consequence of getting up too early? What bearing is it to have on the calligraphy of my long novel? I have qualms.

16th August 1907

I finished the first act of *Cupid and Commonsense* at 9.30 a.m. to-day, after three and a half hours' work. . . . We rode to Fontainebleau this afternoon to meet Lissac and



to partake of an iced drink called 'galerie', special to the town. This, with cakes, at two little tables out on the pavement. The usual crowd of comfortable idlers, and continual passage of motors, carriages, bicycles, and tradesmen's carts. An old beggar-woman, who stank horribly, came and begged. Lissac grumbled at her and almost pushed her away, and then called the shopwoman and remonstrated warmly with her for allowing her customers to be so pestered. He said, laughing at last, that she ought to keep a boy on the pavement with a whip. One felt the instinctive, intense antagonism of the bourgeois to the ne'er-do-well, which neither the beggar's age nor her sex could disarm. The face of the confectioner took on the hard expression of her class usually worn when engaged in defending the rights of respectable and rich patrons against the mob. Then Madame Lissac, Lissac's mother, came across the street to greet us. She would not stay as she was terribly engaged in shopping. A few minutes later we saw her in a hot side-street accompanied by her meek *femme de chambre*, a neat, prim, middle-aged figure. Afterwards we went to Lissac's house and sat in the enclosed and shaded garden and admired the old wood-work of the building and the ancient bourgeois peace of the whole place. In short, a city of pleasure, where beggars are kept in order, and where many ideas flourish that flourished long before Napoleon's abdication and before the Revolution. It is towns like Fontainebleau that prevent the globe from revolving too quickly.

DOUGLAS BUSH

MEMOIRS OF A VIRTUOUS  
FAMILY

To have enriched the English language with a word, and that word one's own name, is to have won the surest kind of immortality. Reputations based on mere artistic achievement 'go up and down' as disconcertingly as Mr. Weller's 'funs' did in the City, but when one has got oneself into the dictionary, into popular speech even, it may be, into newspaper editorials, one is raised for ever above the whims of movements and coteries. The name which inspired these solemn reflections is one that will live as long as Shakespeare's, perhaps longer. It is that of Bowdler.

The Bowdler pedigree deserves the attention of sociologists, as a sort of pendant to the unhappily famous Jukeses. The chronicle of various members of the family all leads up, as it were, to the glorious apotheosis of the best-known bearer of the name. One sees the genealogical tree putting forth here and there little tender shoots of Anglican piety and moral elevation and genteel culture and literary feeling, and, after a period of such quiet growth, gathering its sweetness into a ball—for one metaphor is inadequate—and giving to the world the editor of *The Family Shakespeare*. The *Memoir* is not, one may suspect, very widely read, and I shall quote without stint, for it has, in substance and style, a pervading flavour of its own. It was written by Thomas Bowdler, divine, eldest son of John Bowdler and nephew of the

great Thomas. The title-page runs: 'Memoir of the late John Bowdler, Esq., to which is added Some Account of the late Thomas Bowdler, Esq., Editor of *The Family Shakespeare*. "Trust in the Lord, and do good." London. 1825.'

We hardly need to be told that so far back as history extends the Bowdlers were 'strictly upright, pious, and benevolent, maintaining sound principles both in Church and State'. A Bowdler who went to Ireland as an official married a bishop's daughter, acquired a competence ('His name be praised!'), and died as he had lived, 'bending heavenward all along'. His infant son Thomas, who at three months had 'a promise of blessing from heaven in his very countenance', was taken by an uncle in England, in accordance with the bishop's prayer that he be brought up in the Church of England and 'kept from seedes of schisme and phanaticisme'. The heavenly light in Thomas's countenance was by no means a false dawn. The youth showed himself 'correct in his conduct . . . piously resigned in tribulation, perfectly acquainted with all matters of business', and it was doubtless this last qualification, if not the first, which recommended him to a post in the Admiralty, 'next in situation to the learned and excellent Secretary Pepys'.

Having retired from work rather early, in spite of some brotherly surprise on that score, Thomas died in 1738. He had occupied himself in various beneficent ways, and had enjoyed the friendship of Dr. Hickes, the Scandinavian scholar, and Sir Robert Cotton and his son. His son Thomas also abandoned business before his prime to taste the fruits of virtuous retirement at Bath. Even in his lifetime he was the subject of a public eulogy, which was the more sincere for being measured; a Bath publication

pronounced him to be 'one of the most benevolent men of that, or perhaps, any other place'. His wife, as became a Cotton, had a distinctly literary turn. She was not only gentle, cultivated, devout, but must have possessed a singularly lucid mind, for to instruct her children 'she drew up an explanation of the Church catechism, so comprehensive and yet so plain, that there is scarce any point of doctrine or duty, or of the discipline of our Church, which may not be learned from it'.

'Thus trained in the good and the right way . . . the son of these excellent parents acquired a knowledge of religion beyond his years, and firm principles of action, which gave him, while yet a boy, the fixed and steady character of a man.' This admirable son was John Bowdler, the chief subject of the *Memoir*. He grew rapidly in grace and virtue. The inspiration afforded by the record of a pious ancestry was already making itself felt, for John 'himself expressed very feelingly his thankfulness for the good advice which he had received from his father, and his dread of falling into temptation, and being the first bad man of the family'.

In 1765 he began to read law in the Temple. In that London of Selwyn and Wilkes, John Bowdler, happy with a few choice friends, continued in the exercise of rational virtue. 'Mr. Bowdler at this time frequently attended the "well-trod stage"', but he later doubted if it could ever be 'lawful for a Christian to seek his pleasure there, or to give countenance to anything so seductive and dangerous'. The young man's principles were, of course, fortified by parental letters and exhortations, but these must be passed over. Nor can Mrs. Bowdler's writings be mentioned, except one treatise which contains 'among other things, some very sensible observations on the question

whether our Lord ate the Paschal Lamb on the night before he suffered, and some rules for forming a scheme of Scripture Chronology'. Mrs. Bowdler's religion was 'cheerful, and free from enthusiasm'.

John continued to live in London, applying himself, also without enthusiasm, to the Law. In 1784 his eldest sister died. Her collected poems and essays reached a seventeenth edition by 1830—which helps to explain popular neglect of Shelley and Keats. Her writings include an 'Ode to Hope', 'On the Death of Mr. Garrick' (in which are contrasted the favour of the pit and the favour of God), essays on such Bowdlerian topics as 'Fortitude', 'Resignation', 'The Pleasures of Religion'. The death of his father enabled John Bowdler to relinquish the Law and set up as a country gentleman. The extraordinary sensitiveness of his conscience may be judged from the fact that 'his early knowledge of the Law made him a little fearful of acting as a magistrate', a scruple which must have been unique among eighteenth-century justices of the peace. An even greater delicacy prevented his accepting the office of churchwarden.

But in a larger sphere Mr. Bowdler was indefatigably benevolent. With his eye, like Burke's, on the French Revolution he wrote a pamphlet, *Reform or Ruin*. In this plea for individual righteousness he first holds up for emulation the royal example of virtue and sobriety, and 'afterwards addresses himself to those on whom Providence has bestowed rank, or honour, or wealth, or any other useful talent'. From which one perceives that sound principles in Church and State were still a family inheritance. Bowdler denounced the profanation of the Lord's Day by newspapers and stage-coaches, and he urged the suppression of lotteries with an unexpectedly

detailed knowledge of their fraudulent devices. He helped to raise a fund for the relief of that 'very interesting portion of Christ's Church', the Episcopal Church of Scotland. One can give only a partial list of the many channels of Mr. Bowdler's moral energy—the S.P.C.K., the Society for the Suppression of Vice, the building of churches for that very interesting portion of God's handiwork, the middle and lower classes. He published poems, divine and moral. Indeed, 'poetry had been at all times his delight', and he was constantly quoting 'Shakespeare and Young'. But though liberal he was never lax. 'My dear Madam,' he wrote, 'I beg leave to return your book, for I cannot approve it. The author is plainly a Scotsman, and probably an Unitarian. . . .' In religion, as one would surmise, Bowdler 'had much of feeling, but no enthusiasm'. 'It is better,' he used to say, 'to decide wrong than not to decide at all'—the motto, surely, of all successful moral reformers.

In 1799 a daughter died; 'she drew a little, and that little was very elegant'. In 1815 a son died. Heaven welcomed many Bowdlers at an early age. As for this son, better than the abundant testimony of others is his own exhortation to a schoolfellow: 'Permit me to recommend *the strictest temperance*, which is equally indispensable, whether you wish to promote health, ability, happiness, or virtue. . . .' In his twentieth year he commenced an essay on the duties and advantages of affliction, a perennial theme among the much-enduring Bowdlers.

We have been slow in reaching Thomas Bowdler, but now he really needs no description; he was simply the sum, the fine flower, of the Bowdler virtues. As a child he won the love of relatives and the admiration of strangers. After taking a medical degree at Edinburgh in

1776 he carried about the Continent the judicial mind and incorruptible soul of his house. Abandoning his profession on his father's death, he became a Fellow of the Royal and Antiquarian Societies, and an ornament of Mrs. Montagu's sprightly but decorous circle. But a Bowdler could not remain a mere hanger-on of blue-stockings, however decorous. Thomas 'had imbibed an hereditary desire to be doing good; and happily the metropolis affords abundant opportunities of exercising benevolence'. Like John, he was active in suppressing profane and immoral books. His minor writings must be passed by, to come to the great achievement of his life. 'A literary object . . . undertaken chiefly with a view to the moral improvement of society, now engaged Mr. T. Bowdler's attention. This was no less than presenting the plays of Shakespeare to the public, purified from everything that could offend the most delicate eye or ear.' And so there appeared '*The Family Shakespeare*. In Ten Volumes, in which nothing is added to the original text, but those words and expressions are omitted which cannot with propriety be read aloud in a family. By Thomas Bowdler, Esq., F.R.S. and S.A.'

While recognizing that Shakespeare's lapses in both profanity and indecency were due to the taste of the age as well as to 'his own unbridled fancy', Bowdler was not the less strict in removing them. 'The most Sacred Word in our language is omitted in a great number of instances, in which it appeared as a mere expletive; and it is changed to the word Heaven, in a still greater number, where the occasion of using it did not appear sufficiently serious to justify its employment.' One cannot pass over the classic statement of his aims. 'It certainly has been my wish, and it has been my study, to exclude from this publication

whatever is unfit to be read aloud by a gentleman to a company of ladies. I can hardly imagine a more pleasing occupation for a winter's evening in the country, than for a father to read one of Shakespeare's plays to his family circle. My object is to enable him to do so without incurring the danger of falling unawares among words and expressions which are of such a nature as to raise a blush on the cheek of modesty, or render it necessary for the reader to pause, and examine the sequel, before he proceeds further in the entertainment of the evening.' But Bowdler's delicate literary conscience would not permit him to make additions to the text beyond a few connecting particles. 'I know the force of Shakespeare,' he says, 'and the weakness of my own pen, too well, to think of attempting the smallest interpolation,' although 'a word that is less objectionable is sometimes substituted for a synonymous word that is improper.'

Shakespeare being rendered innocuous to modesty, the editor proceeded to a similar work 'which he deemed of yet greater importance . . . a task well worthy of a man of sound principles and correct judgement,' namely, the purification of Gibbon. 'To this work Mr. T. Bowdler devoted much and diligent attention, and as his seventieth year drew on and infirmities increased, he made it his earnest prayer that he might be permitted to finish the important undertaking. This desire was granted.'

One must resist the temptation to quote examples of Bowdler's re-vamping of Shakespeare and Gibbon. The biographer rejoices in the incontrovertible testimony to the merit of *The Family Shakespeare* afforded by its great and increasing sale. It 'will be the edition which will lie on the table of every drawing-room; and the name of the editor will be remembered as one who has perhaps con-



tributed more than any other individual to promote the innocent and rational amusement of well-educated families.' However quaint a figure Thomas Bowdler is to us—robed in snowy white, with the expurgated Shakespeare in one hand and the purified Gibbon in the other, shining forth, a beacon of rational virtue, in that wicked world of the Regency and His Christian Majesty George the Fourth—however quaint he may be, his nephew's eulogy proved, for several generations, to be absolutely true. And perhaps he did not irreparably cramp artistic freedom. One recalls, for instance, the picture of that insatiable little red-haired reader clutching his well-worn Bowdler in the hand that was to write *Laus Veneris* and *Anactoria*. And one wonders how such a dauntless soul as Bowdler would confront contemporary literature; would even his energetic scissors falter in the task of preparing a hearth-and-home edition of *Ulysses*? In our day, when calling a spade a spade—or a symbol—is frequently regarded as the height of imaginative creation, Bowdler seems as much a part of the dead past as a deinosaure. Yet he deserved at least as well of Shakespeare as, say, Mr. Frank Harris, and if nothing more he should be cherished in memory as a highly significant fossil. It was soon after he died that the Young Girl rose in her majestic innocence and was officially recognized as the tenth and presiding muse of the next literary era, and, if chronology and morality permitted, it might be affirmed that she was the perfectly natural daughter of the Princess Victoria and Thomas Bowdler, Esq., F.R.S. and S.A.

KENNETH CLARK

A NOTE ON  
LEONARDO DA VINCI

Leonardo is the Hamlet of art criticism. His complexities and obscurities keep a large body of writers continually at work. He provides textual difficulties for the scholar, problems of attribution for the connoisseur, and for the professional psychologist a few alarming symptoms. No rhetorician can resist this huge inapprehensible cloud, like a whale, like a camel, like a flying machine. But there is an important difference between Hamlet and Leonardo: we can read Hamlet for ourselves; Leonardo we must take on trust. His words are triply imprisoned—in crabbed Italian, in expensive editions and in formidable dullness; and we are so grateful to the experts who have translated Leonardo's works, and to the men of letters who have given form to the experts' inductions, that we do not ask for critical severity. We do not get it. The bright shadowless air of expertism gives to the commonplace an unusual radiance; and any one who makes his way through Dr. Richter's great selection of Leonardo's writings will be struck by a general falsification of values, due, no doubt, to the assumption that Leonardo was an entirely isolated, superhuman figure. The evidence of Leonardo's debt to his contemporaries and to the ancients, the mass of books he read and quoted, above all, his close connexion with the Middle Ages have passed through Dr. Richter's glowing mind without leaving a stain. Nor do the men of letters who have seen in

Leonardo's many-sided nature an ideal embodiment of their own personalities, draw him with a clearer outline.

We owe a great deal to the accumulated details of Richter, and to Pater's silver intuitions, glowing through the mist of his rhetoric, but both leave us with a vague picture, because both would have us believe that Leonardo was limitless. Now we may worship Leonardo's drawings, but we must admit that they are very different from those of Michelangelo; and a difference implies a limitation, which it is the critics' business to explore. Leonardo, we may say, could draw a blackberry and not the apse of St. Peter's. Can we find in his other, and, especially, in his written work, analogous limitations which will make our idea of Leonardo a little more precise?

This is not the first time an essay on Leonardo has advertised itself with the word 'precision'; for M. Valéry tells us that when he wrote his *Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci* he adored that quality above all things; and our attempt to be precise may well begin with an examination of his. Personally, I have not found it easy to attach a definite meaning to everything M. Valéry says. His prose seems to me very beautiful, but decorative rather than expository, and successful when his thought, too, is decorative, as in his *Au sujet d'Adonis*. Perhaps he uses words as the Chinese, on their porcelain, use motives of design, motives which seem trivial and merely decorative to us, but to the user had a deep symbolical importance. But a symbolism so exotic should, after all, have little influence on our judgements; and in examining M. Valéry's essay on Leonardo we must understand the words he uses in their ordinary meanings. And in so doing there is a seeming difficulty in the title

itself—Introduction to the *method* of Leonardo—for method is, one would have said, precisely what Leonardo lacked. How can we think of method, the ordering of thought which alone makes thought constructive, when confronted with the unfused chaos of Leonardo's notebooks? This, of course, is M. Valéry's point. It is the secret of the highest intelligences, he says, that they find a connexion between things which, to us, escape the law of continuity. By contemplating dispassionately and self-consciously a number of independent facts, the unusual mind will find those new relationships which are the great conquests of thought. 'L'affaire suprême, celle que le monde regarde, n'était plus qu'une chose simple—comme de comparer deux longueurs.' But, as M. Valéry realizes, however many unrelated facts the universal mind records, no fusions are possible unless the facts are selected with an intuitive sense of their potential value, and contemplated as possible units in a harmonious scheme. It is this sense of harmony and purpose which makes the aimless recording of facts a 'method'; and it is this, above all, which M. Valéry attributes to Leonardo. 'Il a un sens extraordinaire de la symétrie qui lui fait problème de tout.' This sentence seems to sum up M. Valéry's essay. I believe it is exactly the reverse of true, and for this reason an illuminating criticism of Leonardo.

The thought of the Italian Renaissance can hardly be defined. On one side of it lay the immense overgrown rationalism of the Middle Ages, on the other that sense of mathematical harmony with which the philosophers of the seventeenth century sought to subdue the brutal observations of their predecessors. In between lay a century of confusion, systemless fact and lifeless theory reacting on one another, persecuting one another, and

uniting to destroy method. That short, fabulous period, the early Renaissance in which Leonardo was born, and which died before him, did not concern itself with philosophy. It had no system. A new power of observation, a sense of personality, had abandoned the logic, but maintained the phantasy of the Middle Age. Never have the credible and the incredible mixed so surprisingly: so childish, too, we may say; for what is this mixture but the impatience of a child? All that age's sense of harmony and construction was concentrated in the visual arts; and if we consider the power of ordering and subduing matter which was shown between the birth of Donatello and the death of Raphael, we cannot ask for a philosophy expressed in any other medium.

This simple way of looking at Renaissance thought is usually brushed aside by admirers of Leonardo with words implying that he transcended the spirit of his time; but without some such background his notebooks seem to me quite incomprehensible. This huge accumulation of facts, minutely and patiently observed, is in no order, is made to no end, and is interspersed with fantasies and riddles, recorded as conscientiously as the facts. If we compare Leonardo's notebooks with one of the great encyclopedias of the Middle Age we are struck, certainly, by Leonardo's greater reliability. The medieval doctors often appealed to experiment; Leonardo often accepted authority: but we may allow that Leonardo's praise of experience is more frequent and his conclusions from it more just. But even more striking in such a comparison is the difference of aim. Albertus Magnus will grant that principles must agree with experience, but adds that facts are materials, mere stones, from which the student may build his philosophy; and stones are not architecture.

The facts in a medieval encyclopedia were collected with one aim, to solve one problem—the problem of God's relation to man. It was assumed that the problem was capable of solution, that is to say, there was some law behind the universe. And if we compare Leonardo to one of the great philosophers of the seventeenth century the result is very similar for they, too, assume that there is some law—they come to call it the law of Nature—behind the universe, a law analogous to their mathematics, just as the medieval doctor's law of God was analogous to his logic. It was, indeed, round one of these mathematical philosophers, and in particular round Descartes, that M. Valéry should have played his eloquence. For Leonardo, so little concerned with synthesis, so distrustful of abstractions, never uses figures save for the most practical purposes. In the sixteenth century arithmetic was a convenience, but not a faith.

In another way, too, the thought of the Renaissance, as we have defined it, coloured Leonardo's imagination—in his sudden unannounced swervings from observation into fancy. Often his descriptions have the texture of a dream: a garden, of which he gives most careful measurements, gradually changes into an Arabian Nights' paradise, a mountain, whose foothills are scrupulously observed, becomes, as he climbs it, huge and terrible, like a mountain of the moon. But, as in a dream, he seems unaware of any transition from reality to fantasy, or rather from the probable to the improbable. And what are the rebuses, prophecies, bestiaries, which form so large a section of his collected works, but the revolt of all that was medieval in a Renaissance mind.

So in his outlook Leonardo was not untypical of his time; and I believe that the actual facts he records were

more a matter of common knowledge among learned men of his day than is usually allowed. Scholars are gradually discovering his moral maxims in early translations of the classics; in optics he made no advance on the Arabs nor on Roger Bacon, their pupil; in anatomy he seems to have learnt from Marc Antonio, rather than the reverse. We can never know if the machines which fill the pages of the *Codice Atlantico* were inventions or drawings of well-known devices. A comparison between Leonardo's mechanical knowledge and that of the late Middle Ages is not possible, for of their skill we see only the result, of his only the intentions. We have no record that Leonardo's machines were ever constructed, but we can be sure that the cathedrals of the fourteenth century were not built without great mechanical knowledge; and it is worth remembering that in the only medieval architect's sketch-book—that of the foolish Villard de Honnecourt—are some of the devices which reappear in Leonardo's *Codice*.

Though knowledge of Leonardo's age, and a belief that he was part of it, makes the form and some of the contents of the notebooks more easily understood, they remain strange, and, in a way, marvellous. Can we explain a list of two hundred Italian verbs, suddenly intruded on some mathematical calculation, or a fake account of a journey to Armenia, or a long medieval bestiary and a number of the worst jokes in Poggio all recorded as conscientiously as a problem of hydrostatics? Of course we cannot, any more than we can explain the workings of our own minds; and as we think this it must strike us that Leonardo's mind, so infinitely greater, more curious, more impersonal than ours, is really no odder. What is strange is not the contents of Leonardo's mind, but the

fact that he should have written it down. We all have lists of verbs and bestiaries within us, but only when we are walking quite alone, or when we are a little cracked, do we give them outward shape. 'Les fous s'y livrent devant tout le monde.' How does it work? Find out, draw it, write it down. These are the impulses which created the notebooks, and of these it is the last, the passion to externalize, which makes them so curious. However great or trivial a thought Leonardo could not contain it; down it went at once, to get on as best it could with canons and jokes and geology. In the mental, as in the physical constitution, said Coleridge, matter is the better for re-absorption. If that is true it may help to explain why so few of Leonardo's ideas ever came to maturity.

For fifty years writers have been praising Leonardo as a thinker, and I am afraid that my last paragraphs may look like a foolish attempt to belittle him. This is very far from being my intention. No one who has read the greater part of the notebooks can restrain his wonder at the manysidedness, the grasp and vigour of their author's mind. But I do believe that they are unconstructive, and that even if they had been published soon after Leonardo's death they would not greatly have affected the course of human thought. As a thinker Leonardo's energy is immense, but it is frustrated energy. Two hundred years earlier he might have surpassed Roger Bacon, two hundred years later he might have equalled Leibnitz. But in certain ages every controlled and vivid shape or sound contributes to that work of art or system of ideas by which the age will be remembered. Without this mute mysterious co-operation no great work can be consummated: and Leonardo da Vinci, living in the early



Italian Renaissance, is best remembered by his paintings and his drawings

I need not write of his early work. The young Leonardo mastered the traditional forms and craftsmanship of his day, and used them with unquestioning joy. The lovely drawings done in this mood need no explanation. Nor need I enlarge the commonplaces of art criticism—how he studied the science of light and shade, how he squeezed the old, disintegrated row of the Apostles into a united mass, how he revealed a new kind of art to Fra Bartolomeo, to Raphael, even to the divine Michelangelo. For a painter might have had these stupendous gifts and not have been Leonardo. The centre of his character cannot be found in a conscious power of composition, but in an unconscious sense of form—in the shapes which satisfied his spirit and the small instinctive movements of his hand. This sense of form has led critics into some elaborate pieces of writing; even M. Valery has written of Leonardo's drawings in a fantastic strain, and, with our limited aesthetic vocabulary, I believe that the appearance of fantasy is inevitable. But I find his poetical analogies less illuminating than the sentence we have already used as a signpost—a signpost which still points diametrically in the wrong direction—'*il a un sens extraordinaire de la symétrie*'.

Organic life, seen in detail, is disquieting. A flower or an insect is made up of wriggling curves, grasping, sucking, writhing. The artist who wishes to fix life, must force these details into some harmonious, comprehensible relationship. He cannot avoid abstraction. But the process of abstraction is so difficult that he is forced to discipline his vision by studying a phase of art in which forms have been perfectly under control. This study has sometimes been

compared to learning a language. I would rather compare it, though the analogy is still a crude one, to the lawyer's study of a legal system, by which the infinite complexity of human affairs is made manageable. The lawyer, like the artist, begins with conscious application, but eventually grasps the system so completely that it orders his spontaneous judgements. Now some such absorption of a new system became necessary when the old Gothic forms had finally lost all relations to experience; and the Italian painters of that time—the early fifteenth century—turned, like their humanists and jurists, to the antique. In their joy at discovering a new way of ordering their vision quality was of no importance; and they saw even in poor Classical sculpture a finality and a power of generalization which might be applied to their own far richer experience.

Only one great painter of the Renaissance seems to have felt no need of this discipline, this way of controlling forms. While his contemporaries were drawing Classical sculpture in the Medici gardens, we may picture Leonardo, as Pater, with fine intuition, has pictured him, 'watching the lizards and glow-worms and other strange small creatures that haunt an Italian vineyard'. For Leonardo loved just that writhing organic life which it is the artist's first impulse to subdue, loved diversity more than unity, or, with a slight extension of those old philosophic terms, loved accident rather than substance. We can feel, from his drawings alone, that Leonardo was a scientist rather than a mathematician; and, indeed, there is a curious connexion between his forms and the special objects of his researches—anatomy and the movement of water. Swirling lines of water, intricate machinery beneath the skin, seem, late in life, to influence the movement of everything he draws, and when we remember how deeply

set in our spirit is the sense of form, it is tempting to believe that Leonardo chose these two subjects of research not only for their scientific, but also for their rhythmical appeal to him.

From anything alive, from anything that moved or grew, Leonardo extracted all that was most expressive of growth and movement, so that his drawings are more like works of Nature than works of art. But there is an art for which the diversity of Nature must be controlled, for which the human mind must create its own forms and rhythms: pre-eminently a mathematical art. And this brings us back to M. Valéry, who has often expressed his interest in architecture, and naturally sees in Leonardo's drawings of churches the architectural dreams of a fellow mathematician. 'On y devine un Saint Pierre de Rome,' he says, 'qui fait regretter celui de Michel Ange.' I can imagine no stranger instance of theory distorting the senses. For Leonardo's architectural drawings show just that lack of interest in motionless abstract things, and that deficient sense of order, which this thought would lead us to expect. To me it seems that Leonardo gave to the golden proportions of Bramante some of his own overpowering sense of life, so that the huddled domes of his churches have a queer vegetable look; and I can fancy them thrusting their way upwards out of the teeming earth. At least it is certain that of his writings on architecture the fullest are concerned with those protests of disorderly nature, the cracks in walls.

So we may return to our original comparison, for Michelangelo, though he protested that architecture was not his art, designed some of the greatest buildings ever raised. To him abstraction and harmony were the end of art. He studied the Classical system of forms so

profoundly that his earliest works were sold as antiques, and the world he created, for all its passion, was a world of heroes. He despised the particular. He is the perfect antithesis to Leonardo, so obsessed with organic life that the dark faces which crowd round the Virgin of his Adoration seem, in the failing light, like creatures in a shallow pool, or a drop of water under a microscope. Even in the single figures of Leonardo's maturity there is something organic: 'wrought from within . . . cell by cell', let us save these words from the derision in which Pater's elaborate passage is held, for we shall not easily find more expressive. But symmetry, harmony? I do not think we shall discover these as Mediterranean art has taught us to expect them, and as M. Valéry thinks he sees them. Perhaps they are there, like the harmonies of some exotic music, with intervals of demi-semitones; but our ears miss the orderly relations of the Pythagorean scale.

DESMOND MACCARTHY

## THE BEAR

It was the hour for confidences, and the talk had turned on Remorse. Each person in the small company round the fire had wanted several times to get up and go, but the impulse had always ended in lighting another pipe or in filling another glass, and in re-stating an opinion already repeated. That vague feeling of shame at having talked overmuch, which makes it harder than ever to leave one's company, had descended upon them. But not upon the host. He delighted in such moments. Standing by the mantelpiece, a tumbler of claret in one hand and a slice of cake in the other, he beamed upon the rest lounging in attitudes of sombre prostration.

'And you, S——,' he said, turning to a long neat youth in a pepper-and-salt suit and a black satin stock, 'what crime weighs most on your conscience?' S——, whom even two-in-the-morning exhaustion could not make natural, pulled himself together, lit another cigarette, and proceeded to elaborate lightly an idea for a story, which he had vulgarized in order to make money for a trip to Dieppe. He had deliberately chosen a smug ending for it. Of this, he said, he would be ashamed to the end of his days. During the silence which followed, unfavourable opinions were coldly and privately registered against him. It was broken by a youth, obviously very communicative by desire and by nature shy. There was an episode in his life he said, which was always bothering him; at the oddest moments, too, staying his hand in the act of sponging himself in a bath, or making him stamp

suddenly at evening parties, and recurring also in his dreams with grotesque details. It appeared that he had been loved by a plain and already once disappointed girl. He had great difficulty in bringing himself to say anything about her, especially that she was plain, but he evidently conceived that he had unintentionally destroyed the convalescent self-confidence of a modest and lonely soul. Unfortunately, in the middle of his story he remembered his own personal appearance, and, losing confidence in the possibility of his audience believing that any woman could have passionately longed for him, he grew embarrassed, and told his story so badly that he created an impression that he had been trying to show off his own delicacy of feeling. 'When next he stamps,' thought the host, reading his mind, 'it is quite likely to be at the recollection of this confession.'

A wicker chair creaked ominously, but no one got up.

'I have been trying to get you to see,' began the host again, 'that what is called a "bad conscience" is made up of feelings which we must disentangle. We ought to classify these painful uneasy emotions according to their causes. For instance, there is remorse at having done something base, and remorse at having hurt someone else; you can be very susceptible to one kind of remorse and yet insensitive to the other. Take myself, for instance, my self-respect is extraordinarily recuperative. Like the vampire it has been dead many times. But I have only to behave decently on one or two subsequent occasions and it revives as fresh as ever. It is not the sins I have committed that go on rankling, but those occasions on which, more or less wantonly, I have injured someone else; rubbed salt, like poor B——, into an unhealed wound; dismissed a fellow creature, with whom I had enough

imagination to sympathize, thinking more wretchedly than ever about himself. Oh, it's having kicked, even inadvertently, someone already down, lacerated someone who had given me pleasure—not even my little well-remembered acts of loving-kindness obliterate those memories for me.

'I'll tell you what I did once; it's twenty years ago, so I can tell it now. Only please believe, so that you may understand how those events affected me at the time, that I am naturally very fond of animals. If I am in a room with a dog, for instance, I can't rest till I have made it put up its paws and push its nose between my hands. As for killing an animal like a bear I would sooner shoot an old lady toddling down the street in furs!

'When I was eleven years old, I once spent a summer holiday in Wales, in a village—I suppose I must call it, though it was more like a small town—among the mountains at the foot of a large slate quarry. Nominally I was staying with my uncle, but he came down so seldom that I was really staying with my cousins and their friends. The oldest of them was not much over twenty. They were all extremely energetic and passionately addicted to climbing. Three or four times a week they would start off with white ropes over their shoulders, their pockets bulging with sandwiches, for day-long expeditions far beyond the stretch of my small legs. I don't know if it was more depressing to watch them start and wave genially back to me on the road, or on their return, sometimes long after the stars were out, to see them tramp heavily back into the house and fling themselves down before supper with the air of weary Titans. How I admired and envied them—especially when they talked about 'rock-work'!

'On those days I was naturally left to my own devices.

There was a small boy lodging in the twin semi-detached villa next door, and I usually played with him. His name was Monty, a name which for years afterwards I could not hear without a stab.

‘Our villas were the only respectable residences in the long street of small stone houses, and the road widened in front of our two gardens. At dusk, when work was over, this space would be noisy with the tired shouting of children and dotted with quarry-men loitering outside uninviting little pubs, while in every kitchen dinner was on the stew. Imagine such a scene: the sky just emptied of a glorious sun, the mountain tops weighed down to earth and looking blacker, steeper, nearer; their dark sides veiled by smoke rising from a hundred hearths. And into this scene comes—from where? Heaven knows from where—down the steep white road, between the staring houses, the queerest pair of travellers; a little jaunty-stepping man in a red sash carrying a long pole and, at his heels, trundling softly through the dust, a coffee-coloured bear.

‘Monty and I were alone the evening that they came. We were up in his sitting-room, talking about cricket, and trying which of us could put the most leg-break on one of those small solid india-rubber balls. The little man and the bear had stopped, though we did not know it, opposite our villas, as the most prosperous-looking houses in the street. It was the gathering noise of footsteps that drew us to the window. Presently, there was a stampede of children, clamorously shrill; stout aproned matrons appeared in every doorway; loutish boys came ragging and jostling up, and pipe-sucking loiterers, trying to seem indifferent, lurched heavily into what was rapidly becoming a crowd.



‘The moment we appeared at the window the little man took off his cap with a most engaging smile and nodded at us twice, as much as to say we should soon see what we should see. His face was tanned; his round black head so closely cropped that it looked as glossy as a mole’s. Smiling more than ever, he began to speak in some unintelligible tongue (I think now he must have been a Basque), at the same time lifting his elbow in the manner of one draining a glass to the last drop. I ran down to the kitchen to fetch some beer, and when I brought it out I found Monty had already fastened himself to the garden railings. The little man tossed off the beer as expertly as he had drained the imaginary glass; then, after wiping his lips with the back of his hand and making another bow, he pointed to the bear.

‘The bear stood with its toes turned in, its head swinging slowly between its bandy forelegs. It was caked with mud and powdered with dust and obviously thirsty; from the corners of its mouth hung down two long strings of dusty slobber. But never did a lovely princess find any one more willing to run an errand for her. In I dashed again panting out, “the bear, the bear—a pail—water”. And it proved even more worth-while than I had expected; for, encouraged by a gesture from the little man, who was now smiling more than ever, it was I who gave the water to the bear. While it was drinking, we looked at each other across its back.

‘There is, you know, also friendship at first sight. Unlike passion, it does not spring up between two people out of a sudden, vivid, mutual discovery of each other, but from a sudden awareness between them that they each have some other love in common. The little man and I looked at each other and then at the bear; and then again

at each other; we became friends. When it had at last finishing sucking the water through its muzzle, he gave its rope a jerk and uttered a sharp guttural cry. I thought I saw resentment in its small choleric eye, but nevertheless it raised itself up on to its short hind-legs, and stood, tottering a little. It was now much taller than its master, who, after placing his own cap on its head, proceeded to push the crowd into a semi-circle in front of our garden; while Monty and I took up our position again at the railings to watch.

‘Bruin on hind legs with pendent paws, twirling ponderously to the monotonous traditional rhythm,

Da Doddy, dong Doddy, da Doddy, dong,

used to be a fairly common street show in my childhood, certainly as common as Punch and Judy are now; most towns of any size were visited sometime or other by a bear-leader and his bear. There was something endearing in the clumsy good nature of the beast, and in its willingness to attempt a grace of movement it could never achieve, which made the performance popular. In a quarry-village in Wales it had, of course, also the charm of complete novelty.

‘The sight of this strange, massive, shaggy animal, with a cap perched askew between its blunt round ears, attempting to balance its weight first on one foot and then on the other as it revolved to the rhythm of a song, produced much laughter. But a bear’s accomplishments are limited and the entertainment would have soon begun to pall, had not the crowd itself improvised a new diversion. Someone threw a crust of bread which was instantly caught and swallowed—the bear nearly, but not quite, losing its balance. Others followed suit; and while the little

man was going round for pennies it sat up begging like a dog, continuing, to the delight of everybody, to catch adroitly whatever scraps were thrown at it.

'It was then that Monty spoke the fatal words: "By Jove!" he exclaimed, "dashed if that bear couldn't field 'point' at Lords."

'Now in excitement one either flings away the very thing one wants to keep, or continues to clutch whatever happens to be in one's hand. In my left hand I was still holding the small solid india-rubber ball, and without thinking, I tossed it to the bear: a gulp—a rather difficult gulp—it disappeared.

'A surprisingly loud shout of laughter made the little man turn quickly round, but after a moment's perplexity, still jingling coppers in his cap and smiling acknowledgments, he proceeded with the next part of the entertainment. Monty and I had exchanged a glance of deep uneasiness, but we were somewhat reassured by the bear's appearing none the worse for that awful mouthful. In obedience to a series of staccato cries from its master, it now went through its drill; shouldering the pole like a rifle, presenting arms, and ending up by turning a series of very slow somersaults in the dusty road. The crowd then dispersed, and Monty and I went indoors; I, with a feeling inside me itself not unlike a solid india-rubber ball. I remember Monty tried to cheer me up by assuring me that bears were the same as ostriches and could digest anything, but, like the children we were, we took a surer—perhaps after all the only road to consolation: we began to think of something else.

'My cousins returned early that evening, and they brought with them a piece of news which ought to have delighted me. On their way back they had discovered an

interesting little climb, not too difficult for me and not too far off. For once, and on the next day, I could accompany them. I don't think any of them noticed that a chance which would have normally set me skipping and squealing with delight, now only provoked signs of temperate gratitude. I said, of course, that it would be "most awfully jolly", but one can't feel enthusiastic when there is a dread inside one heavy and hard as a lump in one's stomach. We were to breakfast at half-past seven, as some of the party intended to take the climb on the way to larger achievements, so I was sent early to bed. Young as I was, I had discovered that troubles were worse at night, and I went very reluctantly, resolving to get up still earlier than the others to set my mind at rest. If only Monty were right in his natural history, how happy I should be! How much I should enjoy the expedition! I could not say my usual prayers, for there was only one in my heart, "O God, make it all right", which I repeated many times. Oddly enough, I slept well and I woke even earlier than I had intended.

'It was a lovely summer morning. The quarry-men had not yet started for their work and the wide road was empty. How was I to find out where the little man and his bear had spent the night? The first person I saw was the postman, who could tell me nothing. I began to knock at one cottage-door after another, each of which opened directly on the same scene: a small kitchen where a rather drowsy man, surrounded by children and waited on by his wife, sat sipping at a table a cup of steaming tea. After a stare of surprise they all behaved in the same way. First they laughed; then man and wife said something unintelligible to each other in Welsh, and then they laughed again. I had begun to despair when I caught

sight of a publican sweeping out his dirty sawdust into the street. Perhaps the man and the bear had put up at the inn? They had not; but he told me I would find them at a small farm among some fields, to which he pointed on the slope above. I ran up the hill—because running stopped my thinking—and reached it out of breath. In the first stable into which I looked a girl was milking a cow with her forehead pressed against its flank; behind the door next it I could hear the stamping and munching of horses. I was going to open it, though it was not likely that a farmer would ever put a bear among his horses, when, at the bottom of the yard my eye was caught by a small windowless tarred shed, the door of which was half open. That would be the place! I approached it cautiously and peeped inside. The shed was dark, but in an instant I had seen everything. The bear was lying on its back and the little man beside it, on the straw on which they both had slept. The man was rubbing its chest and belly, which were drenched with slobber from its mouth. One glance was enough; I stood petrified for one timeless instant, then turned to run down the hill again. As I turned I was aware that the man was trying to pour something into the bear's mouth.

‘My cousins had nearly finished breakfast; I was asked where on earth I had been and reproved for being a bad starter. I mumbled some excuse, gulped my tea, stuffed my mouth and declared I had had enough. It must have been obvious that I was in a rather tense condition, but it was attributed to childish excitement. “Look at little Peter, too excited to eat”, said one of my cousins with a grin. On the road I was given a chaffing but severe lecture: I would never make a mountaineer, if I got excited and neglected to “stoke up” before an expedition.

But later in the day I won golden opinions—there is nothing like misery for making one fearless. I believe I behaved as though I were in high spirits most of the time, but that expedition was like a dream to me, and is so still. The only solid moments in it, so to speak, were those at which, intermittently, the scene in the shed came back to me, and I saw again the slobbered breast of the bear and the little man trying to unclench its jaws to pour down its throat the contents of a green bottle.

‘We picnicked on the top of our little mountain, on the other side of which we found so fascinating a “chimney” that my cousins decided to give up the longer expedition. I remember being lowered down it, dangling at a rope-end like a spider on its thread. When we had all got down it we started at once to climb up again—in short, the afternoon was spent in “rock-work”. It was a happy thing for me, for it meant complete distraction. Where I should ordinarily have been afraid, where footholds only accommodated the side of one’s boot, I had only to think of the bear to become perfectly calm. Even my eldest cousin, who was after all responsible for me and had been reluctant to allow me to try one or two climbs, became reassured. His praise gave me a sweet sad feeling, like the comfort a grown-up person receives from a child who does not understand calamity. I felt that I loved him very much.

‘The long summer evening had begun and in a sky still lit the moon was gathering a white brilliancy, when we struck the homeward road again. The moment my feet were on it, my spirits drooped. The change was so noticeable—and, of course, it was attributed to fatigue—that my cousin stopped a cart and asked the man to give me a lift; and when I was seated beside him I realized

that this was just what I had wanted: to arrive before the others, to find out quickly what had happened, and to get my money to give to the little man. The driver put me down at our villa; I rushed upstairs; I thrust all I had in my pocket, and hurried, limping, up to the farmyard I had visited that morning.

‘There I found the door of the tarred shed wide open. They’re gone, I thought. Yes, it was empty; only the green bottle was still lying in the straw. This was a good sign; the bear must have recovered, or they could not have taken the road again; and at that thought my heart was instantly filled with an adoring thankfulness. Without stopping to ask questions I ran down the hill again to the village; I found I was no longer footsore. To give the little man my money was all I could do in return for an answered prayer. I should find out in the village, perhaps, if they had gone up the road, or down it towards Portmadoc. If I did not find him, perhaps I could find out where he had gone—anyhow I would ask first at the pub. The bar-room was full of quarry-men talking Welsh. It would have been difficult to make my way to the counter, where the landlord was rinsing glasses and pulling taps, but fortunately a man near the door was able to tell me what I wanted to know. “There will be no performance of bear to-night whatever”, he said in his curious sing-song pattering English. He told me he had passed him on the Portmadoc road about a half-hour ago. That was enough for me; I did not stop to hear any more. If I ran I should catch him up; the road was all downhill, which was lucky, too.

‘The broad white road wound along skirting the promontories of the mountains down into the flat valley; and round each turn in it I expected to see two figures—

that little jaunty man and behind him, trundling through the dust, the bear; each time I was disappointed. I must have covered the best part of three miles and yet the road was still empty. My eyes were invariably fixed so far ahead in search of them that, on turning a rather sharp corner, I hardly noticed a man sitting on the wall until I was close up to him. He was looking down, rolling a cigarette between his fingers and swinging his feet backwards and forwards. But the moment I looked at him I recognized that round, blue, brimless cap, and stopped a yard or two off, panting. He looked up indifferently. Then he, too, recognized me, and a smile, very different from the grin with which he had collected coppers, different, too, from that smile which we had exchanged across the bear's back, just moved the corners of his mouth. He looked steadily at me for a moment and nodded his head. Beyond him on the wall I saw a piece of brown fur; it was the bear's skin.

'When I gave him my money (I think it was about seven shillings) he took it without change of expression; then he laid his hand on the skin beside him and stroked it; stroked it and nodded again. If we could have spoken the same language, I am sure a confession would have burst from me; but all he understood was that I was a little boy who was sorry that the bear was dead.'



## READERS' REPORTS

*English Life in English Literature*, edited by Dr. Eileen Power and Dr. A. W. Reed. (Methuen. Six vols. 6s. each.) Admirably planned and executed anthologies of literary extracts illustrating the social life of the centuries. Terse but adequate notes. Every anthology must, to some extent, move over beaten tracks, but the editors have brought together a surprising amount of material which is at once unfamiliar and interesting. An edition with contemporary illustrations on the lines of Dr. Power's *Medieval People* would make a fine gift-book for the next Christmas market.

*The People of the Twilight*, by Diamond Jenness. (The Macmillan Company. 12s. 6d.) It needs no great imagination to visualize the time, perhaps a thousand years hence, when the earth is peopled by one race speaking one language. Already, one of the chief functions of a large museum is the collection of objects in everyday use among tribes on whom the pall of the West, though imminent, has not yet descended. The Esquimaux, at least that branch of them round Coronation Gulf among whom Mr. Jenness sojourned, have emerged so little beyond the bare animal struggle for existence, that even their household implements are almost non-existent. The gap thus left on the shelves of the ethnographical department is filled by Mr. Jenness's book. For a whole year, during which time he saw not a single man of any other race, he lived as one of them, slept sleeping-bag to sleeping-bag with the family that had adopted him, and, bravest of all, shared their diet of seal, reindeer, and fish only, all of

which were often raw, owing to the lack of fuel. There has resulted a unique record, the chief value of which lies in its complete picture of how this people adapts its mode of life to the search for food in the changing seasons. The writing is without distinction; the pictures are only of very moderate interest. But as the book proceeds and, when the author has forsaken his companions, improves, the old glamour which invested the snow-houses of R. M. Ballantyne on the nursery bookshelf is suddenly revived. So they were real, after all, these tales of the Hudson's Bay Company. How long they will remain real is a question which Dr. Nansen discusses apprehensively in a preface. But in Greenland at least, under the policy of exclusion practised by the Danish Government, the race is safe for the present.

*Johnsonian Gleanings, Part V, 1728-35, by A. L. Reade (Privately Printed. London: Lund, Humphries.),* will be of great interest, not only to members of Johnsonian clubs, but to all others (and they are numerous) who never tire of hearing about Johnson and his friends. For instance, they will all, I imagine, be glad to know something more about Oliver Edwards, who 'had tried to be a philosopher, but cheerfulness was always breaking in'. Mr. Reade's amazing diligence *has* told us more. And not only about Edwards, but about many others casually mentioned by Boswell. Even Birkbeck Hill is corrected and supplemented. Among other things, the history of that most miserable time of Johnson's life, the months in which he was an usher at Market Bosworth, which has hitherto been told with serious inaccuracies, is now put straight, and an appendix collects all that will probably ever be known about the episode. Another appendix sums up the

genealogy of Molly Aston. (Every lover of Johnson loves 'Molly'.) A third of the book is practically a small dictionary of Boswellian Biography, every article in which is full of information, largely new and always true.

The book proves that Johnson's college career finally terminated in 1729. An old controversy, in which there 'hath been grete disputisoun of an hundred thousand men', is thus at last settled; and incidentally the whole chronology of Johnson's life between his matriculation in 1728 and his marriage in 1735 is now set on a secure foundation. No book could show more painstaking research.

*A Specimen Book of Pattern Papers designed for and in use at the Curwen Press. (The Fleuron Ltd. 145 copies at £2 2s.)* A praiseworthy attempt to explore a 'small but lovely corner of art'. Mr. Paul Nash, in a stimulating introduction, tells of the uses of pattern papers in old times and the present day, their history, and their methods of manufacture. The body of the book consists of folded sheets of modern examples specially designed for the Curwen Press by Lovat Fraser, Albert Rutherston, Margaret James, Thomas Lowinsky, E. O. Hoppé, Edward Bawden, Enid Marx, Eric Ravilious, Harry Carter, and Mr. Nash himself. Charming coloured stencils decorate the preliminary and text pages, and the buckram cover is overprinted with a Nash design by a process used here for the first time.

*The Colvins and Their Friends. By E. V. Lucas. (Methuen. 21s.)* These modern memoirs—voluminous, illustrated, epistolary; they are like lecture-rooms and concert-halls, the acoustics of which, one understands, it is impossible,

with the best intentions in the world, to prophesy. Some that might have been guaranteed to resound turn out toneless, others are unexpectedly vibrant. One might have been forgiven for auguring not wholly sanguinely about this bulky handsome book. Sidney Colvin was a conscientious, sensitive Cambridge professor somewhat lacking in humour. It soon appears as if Mr. Lucas had been content to leave most of his task to scissors and paste, and what he does say is largely precise unadorned statement. But lo and behold! a complete success; here, for book-lovers particularly, are 350 delightful pages. Colvin, writer of standard lives of Landor and Keats, and Slade Professor of Fine Art, animates this book less by critical or literary talents (though a most gifted man) than by his sweetness and devotion. He was practically the making of Robert Louis Stevenson; he, that is, and the lady who at the age of sixty-four became Mrs. (and then Lady) Colvin, but who from her sixteenth to her forty-fifth year was, through her misfortune and not her fault, united in bonds, which soon became purely legal, to a Rev. Mr. Sitwell. These lovers, who for various reasons waited thirty years, will seem ridiculous and pitiful to the wise youth of this generation; and some of *his* reasons, anyway, are not apparent; but their life had a daily richness such as is now no more accessible to the virtuous than it has ever been comprehensible to the profligate. It is not only that they had their friendship, and that they had many friends, and that their friends were eager and serious-minded; those were days when the best people could write long letters to one another, letters partly about people, but above all about books. To Mr. Lucas, too, after the Colvins, falls the credit of this memoir, because he has exercised to admiration the mature art of

letting excellent material speak for itself. The book must be about seven-eighths quotation, and hardly a letter or an extract but is forcibly and vividly expressed. Stevenson, with a breeziness that is at times self-conscious; Henley, boisterous, boyish in his verbal buffoonery, but spontaneous; Mrs. R. L. S. (many *new* letters), bold, honest, whimsical stuff, with a strong and steady pulse; Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Browning, Meredith, Henry James, Joseph Conrad; much individual and penetrating literary criticism (e.g. interesting letter on Landor from Fleeming Jenkin); letters from almost everybody who was anybody; a clever little note from Mary Cholmondeley; a letter from Cissie Loftus! As for the unforeseen effects, here is one—Mrs. Stevenson to Mrs. Sitwell: 'I have seen your brother. . . . Indeed, I wanted to kiss him, and I almost believe if no one else had been present I should have done so.' Mr. Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh, in his reminiscences, of the same occasion: 'When I was in San Francisco in 1896 I called on Mrs. Stevenson, and as soon as I told her who I was she put both arms round me and gave me a hearty kiss.'—It is Fanny Stevenson's only prevarication.

*The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press*, by W. H. Wickwar. (Allen & Unwin. 16s.) This is a book of exceptional quality, with the merits which are, I think, particularly characteristic of the London school of history, exhaustive research combined with a light and vigorous narrative, and a sound instinct for *verae causae*. The subject is one of great interest, but the material has never been brought together before. It is not easy to make a readable story out of the conflicts of obscure journalists with the law, but in Mr. Wickwar's hands the story becomes an epic of humble pugnacity and resource at war with principalities

and dominations. The right to print without previous censorship was secured, almost by accident, at the Revolution. But the printer remained responsible for what he had printed: for any unseasonable reflection on Parliament he could be committed to Newgate: for any public libel he could be proceeded against criminally. The conception of seditious and blasphemous libel was so wide, that in times of crisis when Governments and juries are naturally nervous, printing might almost have been scheduled as a dangerous trade. The costly procedure of the courts and the vigilance of societies for the suppression of vice and bolshevism added to a poor man's risks. In the year 1819, which was the peak of alarm and repression, there were ninety-six prosecutions. But, as an Austrian diplomatist observed at the time, it was all futile: if the Government wanted to control the Press on continental lines it would have to furnish itself with continental powers. Against irregular and intermittent attacks the Press was bound to win. This ten years' war is the subject of Mr. Wickwar's book. The great publishers and newspapers were not concerned. It was round Cobbett, Hunt, Carlile and the unnumbered host of 'Black Dwarfs', 'Yellow Dwarfs', 'Medusas' and 'Comets' that battle was joined. And the heroes are Carlile's shopmen, dim figures who may have puzzled readers of Macaulay's essays, but are here displayed in all their cockney valour. Carlile conducted the campaign from his room in Dorchester gaol: his wife and sister kept the business going till British Themis laid hold of them too. Then one after another volunteers came forward to sell the *Republican* through a hole in the parlour wall, and to be, one after another, arrested and sentenced to hard labour, till

the authorities retired, if not defeated, at least exhausted by their irrepressible impudence and unquenchable zeal.

Egregias animas, qui sanguine nostram  
Hanc patriam peperere suo.

Mr. Wickwar has done well to record the site of the battle: '55 Fleet Street, roughly where the *Glasgow Herald* office now stands'.

*Aubrey Beardsley: the Man and his Work*, by Haldane Macfall. (*The Bodley Head*. 15s.) Mr. Macfall did his work well, extenuating nothing that was bad in Beardsley's art or vicious in his mind, and tracing what was good carefully and affectionately from its unlikely beginnings to its sudden and short-lived flowering. A book like this was needed. Beardsley's performance was so remarkable that his personality and the stages in his artistic growth will always excite the interest of students, in some generations less, in others more as fashions vary. This book, and the three collections of his designs issued by Messrs. Lane, will together give them all the material they require for judgement. Here we see the successive influences that came to bear on a mind which sickness corrupted before it had matured: Burne-Jones, Japanese prints, Greek vases by turns took possession, but the central impulse was not to be expressed that way. His final manner was his own, the fixation of a *rococo* daydream by an artist to whom lust and disease were equally present torments. Of such a life it was difficult to write without censure or pleading. Mr. Macfall succeeded in drawing against a vivid background of London in the 'nineties a convincing picture of Beardsley, both as an artist and man, calling neither for disapprobation nor pity, and

justified by his works. I should like to add, as a contribution to the history of opinion, that in 1894 *Punch* paired with Beardsley as a subverter of British standards—Thomas Hardy.

*The Life of Richard Rolle, together with an edition of his English Lyrics, by Frances M. M. Comper. (Dent. 10s. 6d.)* The middle of the fourteenth century was not a fruitful literary period in England, though it saw a good deal of theological writing and some verse. In both these categories Richard Rolle ranks high. He is, to quote Jusserand, 'if we except the doubtful case of the *Ancren Riwele*, the first English prose writer after the Conquest who can pretend to the title of original author'. He was born in Yorkshire at the beginning of the century, and though he was sent to Oxford, he left of his own accord without a degree, ultimately running away also from his father's house. From his sister he borrowed a white and a grey dress, cut the sleeves out of the grey one and put it on over the other, adding a rain-hood of his father's to his attire. Thus clad in imitation of an Austin Hermit, Richard embarked on his religious life. He lived as a solitary for some time in the house of one John de Dalton, and then in a cell some distance away, where he preached, wrote, healed and gave counsel, especially to women, for whom he began to write in English. At last he moved to Hampole, where he became spiritual adviser to the nuns, and died, probably, of the Black Death. These details, Professor Saintsbury points out, are among the earliest fragments of English literary biography. Their survival is due to the popular veneration of the hermit, who would doubtless have been canonized but for the disturbances that followed the Black Death. Miss Comper prints a list



of his miracles, 'enough for the canonization of many saints'.

Scholars no longer regard Rolle as the author of the *Prick of Conscience*. Besides his Latin works, he wrote in English: *The Form of Perfect Living*, the *Ego Dormio*, the *Commandment of Love to God*. Of his lyrics, here collected for the first time, some are incorporated in the prose works, for Rolle, like Francis, was for ever bursting into song:

Knowing Him to love Him; loving Him to sing Him;  
Singing to rest in Him.

The lyrics are minstrel-like in character; in style ecstatic, exuberant and unrestrained. He wrote, Professor Schofield says, 'easily, impetuously, constantly', and the spontaneous music of his verse has caused him to be likened to Swinburne:

My dear worthy darling, sa dolefully dight,  
Sa straightly up-right, strained on the rood;  
For thy mickle meekness, thy mercy, thy might,  
Thou bete all my bales with bote of thy blood.

Rolle exalted humility, denounced hypocrisy and all 'professional Christians'. Nor did he care for learning, and the memory of the Oxford theologians filled him all his life with scorn:

How wouldst thou know what is unknown and also  
unteachable?

and,

Let us seek rather that the love of Christ burn within  
us than that we take heed of unprofitable disputation.

Miss Comper's chapter on the still monastic Oxford, and the various teachings by which the young Richard

must have been influenced, is one of the most interesting in her long and detailed book. She examines Rolle's position as a mystic, comparing him with mystics of every age and nation, almost overwhelming the reader with evidence. Her scholarship is undoubtedly profound, yet she finds it hard to clarify and give expression to her thoughts. Such is her excessive zeal that her subject is well-nigh strangled. And it may be that the 'untidy mind' she attributes to Richard Rolle could not inappropriately be ascribed to herself.

*Lectures on Dead Authors, and Other Essays*, by E. H. Lacon Watson. (Benn. 7s. 6d.) This is a collection of papers on many subjects, but all related to the craft of writing. Mr. Lacon Watson varies between saying nothing, and not so well as one could wish, and saying a great deal very well and in a short space, as in his essays on Walt Whitman, Erasmus Darwin, the author of *Sandford and Merton*, and Samuel Butler; indeed, this last essay is so amusing that it might well have been longer. He has a weakness for honest worth; he cannot be really cruel to Marie Corelli and Hall Caine, because they were 'on the side of the angels', and he prefers Day, of *Sandford and Merton* fame, to the 'sickly sentimentalist' J.-J. Rousseau, because Day's ideal of a simple life was not 'entirely a sham'. He overlooks the important fact that if Rousseau lacked Day's English honesty, Day lacked Rousseau's wonderful power over language, and had escaped Rousseau's unfortunate youth, health, and circumstances.

But a kindliness, not divorced from critical power, pervades Mr. Lacon Watson's pages, and he uses to good effect the 'licence to roam wherever one pleased and say

anything one wished to say on any conceivable subject', which he inherited, so he tells us, from Wendell Holmes. It suits this type of book very well; one comes with pleasure on many things, including a remark by Alfred Austin that recalls Plato's *Ion*, and a paper on the *Diversions of Purley*, an almost forgotten work which has nothing to do with the little town that sits, pink and prosperous, on the hills of Surrey. Readers will find that, by Mr. Lacon Watson's book, their minds are rather diverted than 'stretched'.

*The Life of Charles M. Doughty, by D. G. Hogarth* (Oxford University Press. 18s.), is a plainly and pleasantly written account of the author of *Arabia Deserta*. The late Doctor Hogarth was specially qualified for his task by his own knowledge of the Near East, and also by a very un-academic sense of character, which has enabled him to stress the peculiar limitations of Doughty's intelligence as well as his redeeming greatness. Doughty had written *Arabia Deserta*, and yet preferred to think of himself as a poet; he had written verse of a very high order, and yet considered his poetic mission as being mainly *patriotic*; and so on *ad infinitum*. The production of the book, type, binding, format, is extremely satisfying; the illustrations are excellent.

Sei Shōnagon, whose *Pillow-Book* (Allen & Unwin. 6s.) Mr. Arthur Waley has just translated, was a contemporary of Murasaki and an object of considerable dislike to the famous novelist. Judging from Mr. Waley's extracts, Lady Murasaki's aversion was thoroughly justified. It is not that the book is dull or otherwise displeasing; on the contrary, it is vivacious, charming and generally informed

by a sensibility only less acute than that of Murasaki herself. But whereas there is a certain nobility, a certain gravity of feeling about everything which Murasaki wrote, Sei Shōnagon's journal—a loose stringing together of impressions, personal anecdotes, worldly reflections, and social maxims—petillates with malice and a sort of restless wit that must have made her an extremely exhausting companion. She is very good company though, at a thousand years' distance; *The Pillow-Book* can be recommended to lovers of *Genji* for its own sake, as well as for purposes of comparison and for Mr. Waley's delightfully readable introduction to the literature of the Heian period. It seems almost unnecessary to comment on the grace and easy flow of Mr. Waley's English version; the four volumes of the *Tale of Genji* have worked the reviewer's superlatives hard enough as it is.

### PLOTS AND CHARACTERS

How well these Catholics write! This statement, in the present connexion, is at least in part conjectural, for the religious opinions of Mr. Cuthbert Baines are nowhere actually stated in his new book (*A Drug in the Market. Arnold. 7s. 6d.*); but it bears all the stamps of Catholic writing with which Messrs. Chesterton, Knox, Belloc and Co. have made us familiar. It is, from a stylistic point of view, excellently written; the dialogue is natural, never jarring on one's ear, and humorous when humour is required. The material setting is also good; the board-room, and the country house in the Chilterns, are *felt* as well as described, so that we can see without effort the atmosphere in which the characters move. (It may be noticed that Catholic novelists tend to love board-rooms and chalk country.) And it contains a number of

pleasantly shrewd remarks upon modern tendencies, together with some equally silly. As an example of the first one may take the page of protest against people who talk about 'hard economic facts', when in reality the whole of economic and business life is a Walpurgis-dance of fictions, spells, and necromancies at which the seventeenth century would have shuddered. 'Credit, even, is only a shortened way of writing credulity'—oh, shades of Mr. Chesterton! And a good example of the second can be found in the description of Camilla, that modern girl who believed in love that was merely High Comradeship, and kept her lover starved—a type that, judging by all the evidence, perished at least fifteen years ago.

Mr. Baines's characterization—including the inevitable parson—is pretty good up to a point; it is on the plot that

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he, like his colleagues, falls down. The plot of *A Drug in the Market* is fantastically foolish, and also unnecessarily tangled. This arises mainly from the fact that the plot turns mainly around finance and big business; and Mr. Baines's financiers and business men, like all such who are conceived in the Catholic spirit of hatred of usury, resemble nothing on heaven or earth. Wicked financiers must be treated farcically if they are to be endurable, and Mr. Baines, though humorous, is not a farcical writer. He cannot even make up his own mind on their villainy; a small-scale moneylender, who creates half the trouble, is suddenly allowed to become 'God's Mercenary'—a sufficiently vague encomium—and to die a noble death; while even the wicked Napolcon of finance has a good impulse at the end, and is murdered by a nobody, who turns out to be all but half-witted—and that is neither a plausible nor a satisfactory ending to a book whose style and workmanship deserve all praise.

This leads us to consider, however, how much a sense of character and a sense of dialogue and atmosphere are necessary to a detective novel, and how far they can make up for a bad plot—as they are often asked to do, for, unfortunately, most writers of detective novels tend to fall down on the plot. Mr. Crofts is the only writer whose plots are invariably good; and the perfect plot is so rare, in spite of all efforts, that a reasonably good plot can carry off a multitude of sins in the writing. (This, surely, must account for Mr. Baldwin's praise of *The Leavenworth Case*, than which there can have seldom been a worse-written book.) As regards character and dialogue, a long study of detective novels has led us to the conclusion that the budding writer, if he wants to sell his, alas! somewhat ephemeral product, had better aim at dialogue and atmosphere rather than at character. It

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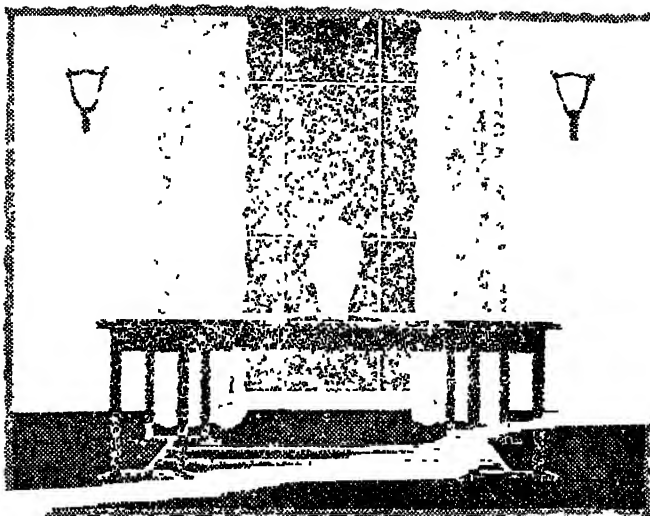
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needs a very strong sense of character to outweigh an inability to write dialogue. Mr. Phillpotts has it, and his square John Ringrose is one of the few detectives who do make the ordinary reader believe that he might once have been a policeman; but Mr. Phillpotts's clumsy dialogue is apt to let him down in the subsidiary personages. However, an ability to write good dialogue and good description in the accepted modern convention will cover an almost infinite lack of characterization: witness Mr. Wodehouse, who has no characters, only a few useful stocks in the whole of his works, but whose bottomless fund of joyful conversation and description has carried him to the height of becoming a company to exploit himself. The British public does not require character.

Witness also Mr. C. R. Benstead, who in *Beginner's Luck* (Chapman & Hall. 7s. 6d.) has carried off what we should imagine he himself would be the first to admit was an absurd plot and some incredibly stagey characters by a cheerful inventiveness of style and dialogue which makes his book quite worth recommending. The adventures of Samuel Pottlebury Brown, shopwalker, to whom his murdered brother embarrassingly left his private detective agency, 'goodwill' and all, really make very jolly reading; and Mr. Benstead has succeeded, as hardly any writer has, in creating a farcical detective who is not intolerable. Awful memories of Sir Basil Thomson's efforts may lead readers to appreciate his achievement.

If Mr. Benstead tries a second venture, he ought really to make his villains just a faint degree more convincing. The Bolshies who creep round the Cornish coast in that mysterious and foolhardy ship are as unconvincing a set of dummies as ever walked, and it is never in the least clear why they are there or why they so earnestly wanted to burn down Trevorlick Towers. Nor is the American





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detective, who for years worms himself into the confidence of the gang, even—it would appear—to the extent of abetting them in the murder of two British detectives, much of an improvement. There is no place for him or for his prey but a film; and, indeed, Elstree might do far worse than secure the rights of *Beginner's Luck*. It moves quickly; it is exciting and amusing; and the scene at the end, where Mr. Pottlebury Brown, fleeing headlong from the gang and unable to stop himself, actually runs into the master-criminal about to kill the Duke, accidentally shoots him, and finishes up, clad only in a green-striped bathing-dress with his foot planted in the middle of the villain's chest, ought to make a fine screen episode.

Lord Gorell's strong suit is also style and atmosphere. He writes prettily, and his Dartmoor scenery is good; we can follow as we should the flight of the young man through the heather with the stolid Devon policeman in the background (*He Who Fights. Murray. 7s. 6d.*). He can also sketch characters; the heroine's mother is well done—incidentally she is far better than the heroine, but that is a common fact with detective novelists, who all labour under the painful necessity of introducing an *ingénue*, while being totally unable to draw anything but a stuffed doll. And his little French detective, though not so original as the lady's companion of *D. E. Q.*, is yet quite amusing. But the plot, though not impossible, is rather thin for the length of the book; and, more serious, its essential feature is exactly the same as in *D. E. Q.* That was a good novel, but it does not bear writing twice. And to use the same plot again suggests—does it not?—a certain deficiency in invention.

[I am sorry that in writing of Mr. Fielding's *Cluny Problem* last month I turned it by accident into *The Chung Problem*.]

# LIFE AND LETTERS

EDITED BY DESMOND MACCARTHY

ASSISTANT EDITOR: OLIVER BRETT

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# LIFE AND LETTERS

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A. J. A. SYMONS

## EDGAR ALLAN POE

### I

Edgar Allan Poe taught schoolboys how to solve cyphers, but the cryptic story of his inner life remains unread, for he explained the Universe but not himself, and appears in history as an embodied contradiction, reasoning yet irrational, who strove to 'reduce inspiration to a method', in an essay which is an admitted hoax; who rejected Truth as a test of life or art, yet posed as an exacting pedant; and who, though celebrity was his greatest solicitude, left his worst enemy as his Executor.

No such ambiguity clouds his work, which presents the single enigma of genius. For nearly a hundred years, readers and writers alike have marvelled at those sombre stories wherein, in sentences as rhythmical as Sir Thomas Browne's, Poe presents conceptions as original (and almost as medical) as those of Freud. They are the clinical observations of a poet whose subject was his own soul; who comprehended by imagination or experience the remorse and neuroses of the mind. The heroes of these strange romances suffer from aboulia, aphasia, or amnesia; some murder and mutilate, others fall into melancholy; all are anti-social, and display the weakened inhibition of exhausted nerves. Kraft-Ebbing records no

more fetichistic frenzy than that of Ægeus in *Berenice*; the theme of *The Tell-Tale Heart* is an *idée fixe*; *The Black Cat* and *The Cask of Amontillado* are exercises in demonic cruelty. Long before psychiatrists had made their lugubrious classifications, the varieties of mental disorder were here exemplified.

But pathologic apologies are far from being the whole even of our prose inheritance from Edgar Poe. In his lighter moods he was capable of simpler fancies; dialogues with the dead, recitals of mesmeric experiments, circumstantial hoaxes, and even a strained and painful humour. He wrote one long romance in the manner of Defoe; three short stories, the first of their kind, in which the hero occupies his evenings in detecting crime; many volumes of essays and reviews; and an astronomical prose-poem explaining the 'essence, origin, creation, present condition and destiny' of the Universe. This remarkable argument for cosmic unity, which has been denounced as nonsense and extolled as revelation, may yet be confirmed by post-Einsteinian thinkers, for, despite Poe's errors in mathematics and confusion in metaphysics, he did at times approach within measurable distance of modern thought; as in his anticipation that attraction and repulsion in effect *are* matter; that Time is Space, Truth Coherence, and all the parts of the Universe reciprocally dependent.

Nor is this all. During his wandering and disordered life, Poe wrote forty-eight poems; but it would be no exaggeration to say that the theory which inspired them has, by proxy, inspired a thousand more. Poe was the first modern writer to rebel against 'the heresy of the Didactic', the ethical tyranny that judges literature by its moral purport; and on the flag of his rebellion were the

now famous words 'Art for Art's Sake'. His contemporaries failed to understand this thesis, but later generations have amply atoned for their disregard; few theories so simple have proved so productive.

Poe's own poems are difficult to describe without analysis or absurdity. It would be easy, and almost true, to say that his verses seem to express more than their meaning, and divulge an unaccountable inner light; but perhaps their singular quality can best be illustrated by reminding the reader that Mallarmé thought it an honour to translate them into French; that a line from *The City in the Sea* taught Dowson which of the consonants is the most beautiful; and that one poem, now purchaseable engraved upon a gramophone record, did what all Poe's prose and philosophy had failed to do: made him, during his lifetime, a famous man.

But though the author of such works might be famous, he could never be popular. In the prim America of the 1840's, the America of Longfellow, Emerson and Bryant, Poe seemed a scandalous and diabolic being, tolerated because dangerous and dangerous because articulate. He was said, or known, to have disgraced himself in many ways; to have affronted a rich benefactor; starved and squandered; suffered expulsion from the army and imprisonment in St. Petersburg; to be a dishonest liar, forger, drunkard and drug-taker, 'as licentious as he was intemperate', fit grandson, indeed, for the traitor Benedict Arnold.

These charges his appearance in some measure confirmed. His deportment, as careful as his dress, conveyed or implied an impression of superiority to other men; his voice, naturally melodious, was unnaturally cultivated; his dark hair, white face, high forehead and wide temples

emphasized the strangeness of his large, open, asymmetrical, long-lashed violet-grey eyes; and all these characteristics were set off by an air of strained earnestness easily converted by drink or argument into wild or even frenzied excitement. On the principle that a man of genius, if he cannot say *all* upon a subject, should say *nothing*, his conversation alternated between silence and monologue; but, if not discouraged by too frequent interruptions, he was prepared to take all knowledge as his province, and would with equal enthusiasm explain or expound the laws of music, mathematics, literature, cryptography, conchology or chance. Indeed, to construct the laws upon which a science or art should be administered was one of his many obsessions; to instruct experts in their own subjects one of his few amusements. Even upon his innocently beautiful handwriting he founded a 'science of autography', by which to judge, to their detriment, his fellow writers. A man so talented and so constituted would have been detested in any society; hamstrung by poverty as Poe was, it became safe to hate him.

That there was a dark side to his character was admitted even by the charitable. Those who tried to help him were more likely than not to have their alms returned with insult; those who gave him employment were mortified to find that even for them he would not or could not, remain a sober citizen. Worse: when in his cups he displayed without reserve his contempt for humanity and progress, words to him synonymous with mediocrity and humbug. The stories of his escapades grew grimmer, as hope after hope failed him; and though a few were sorry, fewer still were surprised to hear, at the end of 1849, that he had been found drunk and dying in the streets of Baltimore.



## II

Twenty-four years earlier a very different future seemed to wait for Edgar Allan Poe when, ardent, olive-faced, a youthful poet, he matriculated at the University of Virginia. Seemed; but his was even then a stranger history than he knew. John Allan, a substantial and, later, wealthy merchant, had, to please his childless wife, adopted Poe in early years, and given him the training of Virginian gentility. What he had not given him was a father's affection; and for this there was a reason. Though Mrs. Allan was childless, Allan himself was not; two women, at least, had borne him natural children. Poe was, therefore, from the first regarded with very different eyes by his foster-mother and -father; to the former he was the object of an overflowing love; to the latter, a constant reminder of his wife's sterility, an intruder enjoying the recognition which he was forced to deny his veritable offspring. It is significant that Poe was never formally adopted; he was nominally the son of the house, but Allan never forgot that he was actually the son of starving stage-players. Why should he forget it? Poe was not his child.

This domestic division was repeated in the outside world. Richmond was an aristocratic city; and Poe's circumstances were known to his schoolfellows, who, with the instinctive, cruel snobbery of the young, made him feel that, heir-presumptive to a wealthy merchant though he might be, he was not and could not be their equal. The influence of such repression upon a hypersensitive, unstable child is not difficult to calculate. Easily excitable, vain and imaginative, Poe grew erratic, introspective, and confirmed in pride. The inheritance of a large fortune made it impossible for Allan to do less than give his 'son'

the best of educations; but his divided mind (divided between Poe and his pocket) is made clear by the parsimony with which the boy was equipped for the University: and though the merchant was undoubtedly shocked, he can hardly have been surprised when he learned that, in his first term at Virginia, Poe had lost two thousand dollars in gambling, and purchased seventeen broadcloth coats. Extravagance is not a privilege we allow to dependants; it is sufficient that they should be grateful. The prodigal was hastily summoned home; high words passed; and within three months, possibly to Allan's secret relief, the costly cuckoo had departed from the nest. Poe was not yet nineteen.

Six years later, three gentlemen of Baltimore, occupied in judging manuscripts submitted for one of those prize contests which even now are not disdained by publishers, were astonished by the calligraphic and verbal excellence of a sequence of stories presented as *Tales of the Folio Club*; and their astonishment was increased when, having without hesitation awarded the premium for prose to the unknown author, they discovered that a poem in the same unmistakable handwriting equally transcended its rival contributions. It was an effective introduction to public notice; and when Poe returned to the city of his schooldays, he did so with the pride of an appointed editor. But it was a return, and not a homecoming, for John Allan was dead, his will, though from its obscurity the subject of several lawsuits, was clear at least in its neglect of Poe.

The returned prodigal was strangely changed. Those who had known the bright athletic runaway saw in his place a debilitated, moody man, who seemed older than his years, habitually wore black, and, despite the welcome

of many former friends, seemed dominated by an undivulged preoccupation. There were, indeed, good reasons for his changed appearance. Poe had endured suffering of many sorts since that day when, embittered and penniless, he had dashed impetuously from John Allan's house. He had served, under an assumed name, as a private soldier in the American army; had been recalled to his childhood home too late to say a farewell word to the foster-mother who alone of its inmates had deeply loved him; had learned the story of his own mother's devotion and sad death; had seen his brother die in early youth and wasted promise; and experienced for the second time the parsimonious affection and unreasonable anger of the man who had taken his father's place, of whom, at the last, he had asked bitterly: 'Did *I*, when an infant, solicit your charity and protection, or was it of your own free will that you volunteered your services in my behalf?'

There was reason, too, for the preoccupation noticed by Poe's Richmond friends; a preoccupation soon exemplified in the unprecedented range, ability, and savage power of his reviews and criticisms; in the morbid and perverse subjects of his stories; in his marriage to a young cousin who, though described as of responsible age, seemed obviously much younger, and was in fact not yet fourteen; above all, in wild fits of drunken frenzy, during which it was not safe to contradict the drinker, and after which the drinker sought convalescence in bed. Turned from his post at Richmond, Poe found another in Philadelphia, but with the same result. It was in vain that proprietor after proprietor quarrelled or cajoled; the young editor worked brilliantly, but invariably a period of sobriety was followed by one of intemperance, during

which his paper was left to produce itself. Wretchedly poor, savage and suffering, Poe became a marked man.

The Americans, with their mystical leaning towards prohibition, call Poe a dipsomaniac; but that his drinking was from the first pathological, an attempt to dissipate a condition he did not understand, is proved by the records of his college days, when he was seen to gulp spirits, not for the taste or in company, but simply to subdue an abnormal nervous agitation. He himself was emphatic that 'It has not been in pursuit of pleasure that I have imperilled life and reason. It has been in the desperate attempt to escape from torturing memories . . . and a dread of some strange, impending doom'. An earlier letter, written at a time when circumstances were, perhaps, more favourable to Poe than ever again, describes, almost as if it were an example from a medical text-book, what the condition was from which he found it necessary to escape. 'I am suffering under a depression of spirits such as I never felt before. I have struggled in vain against the influence of this melancholy; *you will believe me* when I say that I am still miserable in spite of the great improvement in my circumstances . . . I am wretched, and know not why. Console me, for you can. But let it be quickly, or it will be too late. Write me immediately; convince me that it is worth one's while—that it is at all necessary to live, and you will prove yourself indeed my friend. . . . You will not fail to see that I am suffering under a depression of spirits which will ruin me should it be long continued. Write me, then, and quickly; urge me to do what is right. Your words will have more weight with me than the words of others, for you were my friend when no one else was.' Why should a young man bent on literature, and just given his first

opportunity of gaining fame, write such a letter, or endure such feelings?

To provide an answer, it is necessary to consider the complementary phase of Poe's malady, most revealed, perhaps, on that day when he earnestly informed an astonished publisher that Newton's discovery of gravitation was a mere incident in comparison with the discoveries contained in his new book *Eureka*; that a first edition of fifty thousand copies would be but a small one; and that if he, the publisher, were so fortunate as to be entrusted with this epoch-making work, he might from that time onward make its sale his sole occupation.

These symptomatic, extreme moods would explain themselves to any competent neurologist. Poe, like Nietzsche, was a *manic-depressive*; and his existence followed a comparable course. Those upon whom this stigma is imposed by fate may, if fortunate, conquer or conceal their aberration; but Poe was not fortunate; and his life became a rhythmic curve of unnatural excitement and depression. Such sufferers are numerous. In the untroubled interregnums between their phases, they are able, as Poe was, to take or keep their place in the world; in their periods of exaltation they may seem tireless, stupid, or inspired; but during those dangerous periods when effort seems useless, when the mind quivers from unfounded fears, and an excessive agitation is induced by the slightest fret, some external intervention is required to save them from the menace of suicide or lunacy. Such an intervention may be exercised by the sublimation of a creed, or the suggestion of a powerful personality; these failed Poe, and he found a fatal salve in drugs and drink, which modified the present, only to intensify the next, attack.

But the chain of cause and effect did not end here. Just as behind Poe's intemperance lay an abnormal psychic susceptibility, so behind that susceptibility was an abnormal sexual attitude, more difficult to classify than his manic-depressive psychosis, but prompting it, and plainly manifested in his marriage to a cousin of thirteen after an ineffective attempt to marry her at twelve, a cousin-wife who was not even a wife in name, since Poe called her 'Sis'; in the strange sexlessness of his heroes and heroines alike, who love with 'fires that are not of Eros' and 'a sensation that will admit of no analysis'; in the frequency and eccentric conduct of his love-affairs, which yet were never brought to consummation; and in the hints, scattered throughout his early and later work alike, that

From Childhood's hour I have not been  
As others were; I have not seen  
What others saw; I could not bring  
My passions from a common spring.  
From the same source I have not taken  
My sorrow; I could not awaken  
My heart to joy at the same tone;  
And all I loved, I loved alone.

What it was that Poe did love, he never defined, save in the creation of the grimmest heroines in literature; but it seems clear that in a physical sense he did not, or could not, love at all; that some dark experience of early days stood as an inflexible inhibition between his desires and their passionate expression; that he was constantly attracted to women, but also consistently repelled by the circumstances of any love that did not remain Platonic; and that this involuntary yet unwilling repression was, if

not the provocative cause of his ailment, the final cause of his downfall.

### III

Early in 1844, readers of the *New York Sun*, the first, but unfortunately not the last, penny newspaper in that city, were amazed to learn that the Atlantic had been crossed by flying machine in three days, the crew including Harrison Ainsworth the author, Monck Mason the aeronaut, and six other adventurers. The crowd believed; but those whose eyes were sensitive to words and style could see, in the careful punctuation, the marked use of emphasis, the seeming fidelity to fact, close pseudo-reasoning, and masterly use of the *non sequitur*, the hand of Edgar Allan Poe. Tired of Philadelphia as he had tired of Richmond, still poor as a schoolboy, with a young wife suffering from consumption, and suffering himself from those recurrent fits of melancholy that drove him to an alcoholic oblivion, Poe had not lost heart; indeed, to his impossible quests for peace and comfort he had added a third, which was to prove not less elusive; the creation of an independent magazine under his own control. Meanwhile he was still a hack-contributor and, when occasion offered, editorial director of the journals of other men.

The poems that he wrote to please himself, and the prose tales in which he dissected his own spiritual sickness, had alike failed to bring him more than faint unremunerative applause; but the wide celebrity he so desired he gained by a poem which, though not quite a *pièce d'occasion*, he recognized as not his best work. There is evidence that Poe anticipated the popular success which awaited *The Raven*, for he arranged a campaign of simultaneous publication in several journals; but even

his anticipations must have fallen short of the instantaneous and transatlantic applause which this macabre fancy evoked. Even Browning liked it; and from the time of its issue until the time of his death, Poe never made a journey without being pointed at, his name seldom appeared in print without a reminder of his gloomy bird.

The nearest approach Poe ever made to seeing his dream of an independent journal realized, dates to this time. He joined forces with two journalists in the conduct of a weekly, *The Broadway Journal*, which had no fewer than three editors, each of whom pursued his course by the light of his own reason. In due course the disagreements which marked Poe's relations with newspaper owners occurred; and he was left finally as the surviving editor and sole proprietor. But, despite all his optimism and energy, the under-capitalized venture failed; Poe made desperate efforts to meet the bills and notes of hand in which the purchase had involved him, but ultimately even he saw that there was no alternative but to abandon it.

His home life has been described many times, and the wooden cottage at Fordham, wherein he endured a penurious, precarious existence with his mother-in-law, his wife and his cat, has now been scheduled as a national monument. Every visitor to his house, every one, indeed, who knew Poe's circumstances, united in praise of Mrs. Clemm, Virginia's mother, to whose protective care he owed his last five years. During that time, in the intervals of his productive misery, he conducted a vast correspondence concerning his chimerical *Stylus*, which was to make him the arbiter of American letters, and wrote some of his finest poetry. But, as he grew older and weaker, his fits of depression grew inex-



trically associated with drink; it was a vicious circle in which depression led to drink, drink to depression. As the circle tightened, Poe's life became an erotic comedy, but a comedy in the cruel vein of his own humour. His dying wife still exercised her domination; and he still loved her; but the repressed force of his sexual nature, held in check though it still was by that undefined inhibition, led him to give a thinly disguised devotion to every woman in his circle. The more savage his criticisms grew, the more tolerant he became of every feminine poetaster; until the praise he refused Emerson was bestowed on Mrs. Osgood. His manners grew to ladies more elaborate, to men more haughty; the passion which could not translate itself into act passed into adoring letters as long as essays. One recipient published a poem 'To —'; the poet replied with one 'To F—s O—d'. The *literati* of New York, wriggling with hatred of the critic who was now airing his opinions not only of their works but of their appearance also, chattered scandalously, and one day a deputation of bluestockings, having convinced Mrs. Osgood of her danger, called upon Poe, with her permission, to demand the return of certain imprudent correspondence. The enraged writer named them 'busybodies', not without justification, and, knowing well what hand was behind the demonstration, added that 'Mrs. Ellet had better come and look after her own letters'. It was an unwise jibe, wrung from a suffering man; and, regretting it, Poe deposited the epistles of his former 'flame' upon her doorstep. Stung to fury, Mrs. Ellet denied receiving them, and made accusations of theft; whereupon her brother announced his intention of shooting the detainer. Agitated and nervous, Poe invited a former friend, with whom he had

quarrelled, to act as his second in the impending duel, but his request was refused in words that led to blows; these, added to Poe's published criticisms, led in turn to a newspaper correspondence so violent that the poet fought and won an action for libel against his detractors, who had ended by adding forgery to the long catalogue of his crimes.

The agonizing, though long expected death of his wife, which is said to have been expedited by anonymous letters from the still malignant Mrs. Ellet, almost killed Poe himself; he was nursed back to sanity by a charitable neighbour, the married daughter of a doctor, to whom in return he offered his ineffective love, in terms of spiritual passion which, misunderstood, ended her ministrations. But the fatal farce of his amours was not long interrupted. To procure funds with which to launch his long-delayed magazine, he delivered several lectures, and as a result entered into correspondence with a Mrs. Richmond who, it seemed to him, had in her gift the enigmatic affection which had become his greatest need; unfortunately, or perhaps in this case fortunately, the lady also had a husband. Simultaneously, however, and, it appears, at first sight on paper only, he felt himself drawn to another poetess, Mrs. Helen Whitman, who possessed the special charms, to Poe, of eccentricity and sorrow. After exchanging letters, lengthy even for him, he called upon the lady, and at this first meeting expressed an ardent love. The flattered and romantic widow, who seems to have very thoroughly deserved her epithet 'eccentric', promised to write; and, after pressure by further letters and interviews, consented to become Mrs. Poe. An abandoned duel, an abortive attempt at suicide, two formal relinquishments of her property, and a broken

promise of temperance, were the final incidents of this singular episode, which left Poe still without a wife.

Mrs. Richmond, however, remained; and to her Poe turned with a praiseworthy resolution 'to shun in future the pestilential society of literary women'. Unfortunately, Mrs. Osgood's sister, who had marked the progress of her former 'affair' with the poet, conceived it a duty to intervene with warnings; and a complicated correspondence of reproach and reprisal was occupying Poe's attention when, unexpectedly, a young man from Oquawka wrote offering to finance *The Stylus*. It was a double irony that Poe's necessarily Platonic flirtations should arouse such damaging and violent scandals, and that the patron for whom he had sought so long should arrive too late. For it *was* too late; Poe had lost his grip on life; nothing could remove that sense of 'strange, impending doom'; and the first tangible result of the dollars advanced by Mr. E. H. N. Patterson was a night in prison for intoxication, at the outset of a tour to gain subscribers. And then, at Richmond, Poe met a former sweetheart. This lady, also, was a widow, not without means, also of a certain age; and she also yielded to the advances of the famous poet. He was unwilling, however, to lose Mrs. Richmond; so the letter to his mother-in-law announcing his engagement to Mrs. Shelton also explained that 'I must [live] somewhere where I can see Annie'. Following this letter he set out for New York, intending to close the cottage at Fordham; but at Baltimore, on the way, the death he had so long anticipated ended his wanderings.

\* \* \* \*

There is no moral to this tragic story. We can observe the ills from which he suffered, but their cause is no easier

to name than the songs the sirens sang. Was it his early, ideal love for the kind mother of his boyhood friend which induced that fixation of the passions that wrecked his life, or was the obstacle a physical one? Did the graveyard tales and lays of his negress nurse instil the unreasonable fears that pursued him so insistently, or was it a simple symptom of instability? These questions are not idle; for Poe was a man haunted all his days by ghosts, ghosts which we cannot quite recognize as they stand behind the thin but not transparent curtain of his works.

PETER QUENNELL

## MR. T. S. ELIOT

The intricate temple-front of the house of fame contains many niches. Its arrangement is asymmetrical. Hardly one of these niches is exactly balanced by a fellow. There are few of them, indeed, whose relation to the general design may not provoke long and indecisive cogitation. For does not the architecture live? As birds at roosting time, the occupants continually shift their level. Some are driven from the loftier perches and, after distressful wheelings to and fro, accommodate their pretensions on a humbler shelf. Clumsily equipped like peacocks, some sprawl and struggle to retain an exiguous, airy vantage point, then flounder heavily towards the earth. Some choose a capacious solitude, but, like City pigeons, find that they prefer the bustle and promiscuity of the crowded ledges below them. So it is across the whole broad façade; and thus, with a particular noise and fluttering, are contemporary reputations disputed.

Amid this perpetual *va-et-vient* but a single modern poet keeps his post with any semblance of equanimity. Flown up into his niche by stages which, though scarcely rapid, have nevertheless been imperceptible and fairly easy, Mr. T. S. Eliot seems all the more secure because the body of work upon which his reputation depends is still extremely slight. For many critics the compactness of Mr. Eliot's achievement has proved an added charm: it has fostered mystifications and favoured a ponderous approach. If the centre of Mr. Eliot's work is hard, the periphery is variegated and amusing. Between the circum-

ference and the centre the poet, whether intentionally or unintentionally, has constructed a considerable labyrinth. With reference and counter-reference he has confounded entrance and exit—a maze of mirror-rooms where, like the escaping comedian, a critic sees his every movement beget its complementary throng of Chaplins; call them St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, Mr. Eliot himself, or what you please! His borrowings, in short, have been eagerly canvassed, usually to little effect and, sometimes, to the almost complete exclusion of his real poetical merits. Let our device be: Mr. Eliot first. As a poet he possesses, or else does not possess, virtues which may, or may not, lend his derivations interest. The poet must be his own apologist, and his work will suggest its own best commentary. Appendices, notes, cross-references may, perhaps, supplement our appreciation. When the interior eloquence of the verse has failed, their explanation is quite valueless.

Criticism, on the other hand, which tended to discount Mr. Eliot's extraordinarily vivid sense of his connexion with the past would, perforce, largely ignore a main factor of his poetical development. The use of the word 'development', freely and speciously employed by periodical critics of literature—as though from careful observation, as though the poet's growth were taking place under their very eyes, while it is, in fact, from the depths of ennui they write, from the oppressive consciousness of a weekly duty to be performed—may, I think, in Mr. Eliot's case be justified. Mr. Eliot's development has been so well organized and so measured, that its stages can be differentiated with some degree of honesty. Never can he have lacked (as how many poets all their lives!) that sense of a past which is not merely the poet's background and

appropriate setting, but of which a veritable poet is the microcosm or resumption in little: those constellated luminaries are the planets which regulate his course, but their control is by no means absolute: tradition is susceptible of hourly change, and a true poet's existence, even the smallest, may profoundly alter the laws of the universe, apparently dead and immutable, from which he derives his being.

Stated simply and concisely, as Mr. Eliot has stated it in an admirable essay entitled *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, the conception of the past outlined above seems to hold nothing novel or disturbing. Academic critics would, no doubt, accept it gladly, and might even be inclined to question the necessity of a detailed recapitulation. Granted that it is, after all, no more than the doctrine of plain common sense, I would reply that the obvious is seldom enunciated with sufficient vigour, and that it is the critic's proper function to carry ordinary intelligence to a pitch of exceptional clarity. This Mr. Eliot has done; his judgements are rarely startling, but a subsequent examination will often disclose that the inroads they have made have been unusually thorough. With his painstaking air of unwillingly yet patiently elucidating some self-evident theorem, he has an art to sap cherished values and thrust aside the various weighty obstacles which custom and indolence may throw in his way. The idiosyncrasies of his critical method, his trick of under-statement, for example, provide Mr. Edwin Muir with material for several pages of discriminating comment. 'In his essays,' writes Mr. Muir, 'he seems most of the time to be concerned with minor points, but he is in reality concerned with essential ones.' Mr. Eliot is, he goes on to declare, 'the most complete critic of our time'.

Mr. Muir's brief survey of Mr. Eliot's tendencies and final achievement, part of a volume called *Transition* published last year, thus far sensible enough, thenceforward slackens its grasp and entirely loses touch with its perplexing and controversial subject. His appreciation of the critic has been just and generous; his assessment of the poet is timid and illiberal. Poet and critic cannot be separated; if separated they are, violence will be done to the qualities of both. Certainly, Mr. Eliot is not the type of critic he himself has frequently condemned, the 'imaginative critic', a critic who confuses the functions of criticism and creation. No: Mr. Eliot the author of *The Sacred Wood*, and Mr. Eliot the poet of *The Waste Land*, are inseparable, because in both capacities we realize that he is controlled by an awareness of the past, which is so acute as to amount to an obsession. That obsession and the possibility of exaggerating it Mr. Muir is quick to clutch at. Indeed, he sees fit to qualify his previous enthusiastic praise and remarks that 'the influence of tradition' on Mr. Eliot's critical work 'is not to make it uniformly bold and comprehensive, but more generally to make it cautious'. Tradition which, he has admitted, is the foundation of Mr. Eliot's finest critical efforts is also, if we are to believe Mr. Edwin Muir, his ultimate downfall. There, unfortunately, he breaks off. Taking his indictment a step farther, he might, with the basic shred of fairness underlying all caricatures, have represented Mr. Eliot's position in our midst as somewhat resembling the role of a medieval schoolman, an intensively active but determinedly obscurantist talent, tightly barricaded behind massy ramparts of erudition. Personally, I must hasten to disown it, but the picture would, I am afraid, get a reflected luminosity from the ritual pomp and



circumstance with which (unknown to Mr. Eliot) the least discerning of his admirers are apt to surround the mention of his name. Such readers Mr. Eliot's work has furnished with a kind of topical *pons asinorum* that, once crossed, entitles them to the agreeable illusion of a disillusioned maturity. His work, like the work of every artist, has, besides its essential core, a stony, inessential rind; made up of the redundancies and surface peculiarities of his method, it will afford aspiring mediocrity a ready purchase.

But, as commonly happens, his predominant characteristic is the very quality of which his imitators stand most signally in need—Mr. Eliot's seriousness, I mean. Yet, Mr. Eliot the poet 'lacks seriousness', complains the critic of *Transition*, and follows up that attack with the preposterous assertion that Mr. Eliot has brought to birth 'an anguished vision of the world . . . expressed in light verse'. Light verse! If there be any other modern poem more heavily charged with the importance of its theme than *The Waste Land*, it is a pity that its circulation should be so narrow, and that I, for one, should never have set eyes on it. Among contemporary English poets Mr. Eliot alone is consistently and unremittingly serious. His verse is occasionally meagre, dry, thin, shows as it were a tortured anatomy of starved and cicatrized ribs; it is frequently difficult of access. But it is pre-eminently serious, with the seriousness of a modern cenobite or stylite—not, be it understood, with the serious (often lugubrious) frivolity of the quarters in which Mr. Eliot's reputation is most bruited about, not serious with the Agag-like delicacy of water fowl who trip from leaf to leaf across the lily pond, committing their full weight to nothing, anxious that every topic should bear the tiny star-shaped

print which attests their scurrying passage, hurried, timorous, with faint *cluck-cluck* and round black eye covertly shining on the look out for ambushed ridicule. Mr. Eliot, we should remember, I think, is by origin a citizen of the New World, a Bostonian, and, as such, combines the gravity of two hemispheres. I shall, I hope, not be accused of facetiousness if I pretend to recognize the trace of a remote Puritan ancestry in Mr. Eliot's literary composition. The Puritan movement has always played an incalculable part in the history of English literature, and now receives fresh impetus from its refuge beyond the Atlantic. Mr. Eliot's seriousness is the seriousness of a cultivated American; it is very unlike the brand professed by modern English writers, concerned as they generally are to roll back the uppermost layer and reveal the ingenious stratification beneath: levity, ennui, and fundamental indifference. His puritanism, of course, has attracted innumerable foreign deposits. Still, polished and patinated, there at bottom it remains, solid and unmistakable. Thus, the baroque satire, the grotesque imagery of many of the shorter poems, collected under the title *Ara Vus Prec*, does not convince and transport a reader as, say, the magnificent exordium of *The Waste Land* may convince and transport him. '*Mélange adultère de tout*,' writes the poet of himself, but we reserve our incredulity; there is a great gulf fixed between Mr. T. S. Eliot and the agonized fluency of poor Tristan Corbière.

For a moment, however, let me return to Mr. Edwin Muir. Criticizing Mr. Eliot's earlier satirical poems, 'in its hint of theatricality', Mr. Muir exclaims, 'this poetry is like Heine'; that is the critic's initial error; instead of *Heine* read *Jules Laforgue*, and the comparison becomes more nearly exact. Mr. Eliot's cultivation of Laforgue

has been advertised in many prose references: it is also echoed in his verse, notably in his splendid adaptation of Laforgue's:

Simple et sans foi comme un bonjour

a line which Mr. Eliot amplifies as follows:

I should find  
Some way incomparably light and deft,  
Some way we both should understand,  
Simple and faithless as a smile and shake of the  
hand.

In face of the above quotation, it will be unnecessary to insist that, when I speak of 'borrowings', of 'indebtedness', 'derivations', I intend those words in the highest sense. The comparison of Laforgue and Mr. Eliot yields a number of close parallels. A critic has only to read the sheaf of charming letters in which Laforgue comforts a lonely and unhappy sister, and read a little deeper than their surface irony into the two volumes of his collected verse: the evidence of an innate, an unconquerable puritanism will emerge. And then they share mannerisms, affectations, the engaging blend of self-pity and self-ridicule which diversifies Mr. Eliot's impressionist *Portrait of a Lady*:

You will see me any morning in the park  
Reading the comics and the sporting page.  
Particularly I remark  
An English countess goes upon the stage.  
A Greek was murdered at a Polish dance,  
Another bank defaulter has confessed.  
I keep my countenance,

I remain self-possessed  
Except when a street piano, mechanical and tired  
Reiterates some worn-out common song  
With the smell of hyacinths across the garden  
Recalling things that other people have desired.  
Are these ideas right or wrong?

They share the same master; but, while Laforgue early shook off Baudelaire's powerful spell, his influence on Mr. Eliot is permanent; and if I were asked what standards I imagine Mr. Eliot has in view when he writes of verse as being 'classical'—exclusive of the dramatic poetry of seventeenth-century France and the Latinist verse of eighteenth-century England—I should, for instance, cite these lines:

Pour l'enfant, amoureux de cartes et d'estampes,  
L'univers est égal à son vaste appétit.  
Ah, que le monde est grand à la clarté des lampes!  
Aux yeux de souvenir que le monde est petit!

So full and satisfying, that quatrain resumes unnumbered echoes; it asserts its own peculiar strangeness and originality; its light turns backward on the past and proclaims the essential continuity of human poetic inspiration.

But our connexion to the past has a secondary and terrifying aspect; that theme, with others, has produced *The Waste Land*. In *The Waste Land* Mr. Eliot presents civilized man as a *literary* animal; he is nourished by the past; he is also ridden by it. Tradition is a kindly nurse; she is also the hag-mother who wormholes his mind with associations. They are the 'thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season'. In this waterless landscape, her myriad voices recur like the burden of grasshoppers:

O-O-O-O that Shakespeherian Rag—

It's so elegant

So intelligent. . . .

and:

A noise of horns and hunting . . .

but the refrain is travestied; it becomes:

The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring  
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.

Here Mr. Eliot's method resembles the legerdemain of Madame Sosotris, insidiously flicking down one after another the old-new symbols of her Tarot pack:

Madame Sosotris, famous clairvoyante,  
Had a bad cold, nevertheless  
Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,  
With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,  
Is your card, the drowned Phœnician Sailor,  
(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)  
Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,  
The lady of situations.  
Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,  
And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,  
Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,  
Which I am forbidden to see.

His constant play of allusion and inter-allusion and parody is, for some readers, I know, according to temperament either a matter of paramount importance or a continual bar to any sustained effort of appreciation. One faction reads Mr. Eliot's appendix much more carefully than it reads his poem; it is very learned in the precise relation of Philebas the Phœnician and the Levantine

seller of currants. The opposing faction has its sensibilities perpetually thrown out of gear; it is jolted, alarmed, mortified, and eventually limits its admiration to a few isolated lines. In either event, the force and rapidity of Mr. Eliot's verse goes unnoticed. They neglect his rhetorical energy, charioting on its flow this wrack of reference and quotation:

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf  
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind  
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are  
departed.

Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.  
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,  
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends  
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are  
departed.

And the friends the loitering heirs of city directors;  
Departed, have left no addresses.

By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept. . . .

Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,

Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.

That rhetorical eloquence, at the first sight so harsh and so ungainly, but which at each successive reading gains in persuasiveness, is the especial property of Mr. Eliot's later verse. It owes something to the blank verse of Elizabethan dramatists and a great deal to *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Mr. Eliot has emulated a characteristic of Baudelaire's poetic method which Laforgue called his 'Yankeeism', his tartness, that is to say, the abrupt, unnatural cast of his sentences, his habit of deliberately interposing some startling, bathetic piece of imagery. But Laforgue's criticism of Baudelaire seems so apposite to the present

occasion, that it may be excusable to transcribe the paragraph in full:

Il a le premier trouvé après toutes les hardiesses de romantisme ces comparaisons crues, qui soudain dans l'harmonie d'une période mettent en passant le pied dans le plat: comparaisons palpables, trop premier plan, en un mot américaines semble-t-il: palissandre, toc déconcertant et ravigottant. . . .

Compare Mr. Eliot's:

Let us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherised upon a table;  
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,  
The muttering retreats  
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  
Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
Of insidious intent  
To lead you to an overwhelming question. . . .

Like Baudelaire, Mr. Eliot is roused to immediate vehemence by the *lieux communs* of popular sentiment. The embarkation for Cythera is an adventure as squalid and pitiful as the worst:

Quelle est cette île triste et noire? C'est Cythère,  
Nous dit-on, un pays fameux dans les chansons,  
Eldorado banal de tous les vieux garçons.  
Regardez, après tout, c'est une pauvre terre.

Its fabled pleasures are the coincidence of languor and opportunism:

Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;  
Exploring hands encounter no defence;  
His vanity requires no response,  
And makes a welcome of indifference.  
(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all  
Enacted on this same divan or bed;  
I who have sat by Thebes below the wall  
And walked among the lowest of the dead.)  
Bestows one final patronising kiss,  
And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit . . .

But the parenthesis dignifies its context. Through the poetic spectator's ageless, impersonal vision, the ludicrous episode acquires a sort of tragic solemnity. I have reserved the foregoing quotation until the last, because it will serve to emphasize what is, I believe, the unifying, the saving principle of Mr. T. S. Eliot's verse. That it may survive, poetry must be anonymous; it must be strictly, religiously impersonal. 'The progress of an artist,' Mr. Eliot writes, 'is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality'. To have grasped this principle and unhesitatingly, rigorously, unselfishly put it into practice, is, I believe, Mr. Eliot's chief claim on the attention and applause of the future.



EVELYN WAUGH

## RONALD FIRBANK

It is no longer necessary to be even mildly defiant in one's appreciation of Ronald Firbank. There is, it is true, small probability of his ever achieving very wide recognition, and even among critics of culture and intelligence there will, no doubt, always be many to whom his work will remain essentially repugnant, but already in the short time which has elapsed since his death, his fame has become appreciably stabilized so that condemnation of him implies not merely a lack of interest in what may or may not have been the amiable eccentricities of a rich young man, but also the distaste for a wide and vigorous tendency in modern fiction.

Those who delight in literary genealogy will find his ancestry somewhat obscure. He owes something to *Under the Hill* and Baron Corvo, but the more attentively he is studied, the more superficial does the debt appear. His progeny is unmistakably apparent. In quite diverse ways Mr. Osbert Sitwell, Mr. Carl Van Vechten, Mr. Harold Acton, Mr. William Gerhardi, and Mr. Ernest Hemingway are developing the technical discoveries upon which Ronald Firbank so negligently stumbled.

These technical peculiarities are late in appearance in Firbank's work and are the result of an almost incommunicable sense of humour attempting to achieve means of expression. His early books are open to the charge, so indefatigably launched against them, of obscurity and silliness. When he had in *The Flower Beneath the Foot*, *Prancing Nigger*, and *Cardinal Pirelli* fully developed his

technical method the obscurity gives way to radiant lucidity and most of the silliness is discovered to be, when properly expressed, exquisitely significant. Some silliness, a certain ineradicable fatuity, seems to have been inherent in him. His introduction of his own name in *The Flower Beneath the Foot* and *Prancing Nigger* is intolerable *vieux jeu*; perhaps Firbank's sense of humour had reached a degree of sophistication when it could turn on itself and find the best fun of all in the doubly banal; if so it was a development where few will be able to follow him. His coy naughtiness about birches and pretty boys will bore most people with its repetition. He exhibits at times a certain intemperance in portraiture, indulging too gluttonously an appetite other novelists, even his most zealous admirers, struggle to repress. These defects, and perhaps some others, may be granted to his detractors, but when everything has been said which can intelligently be brought against him there remains a figure of essential artistic integrity and importance.

It is the peculiar temper of Firbank's humour which divides him from the 'nineties. His raw material, allowing for the inevitable changes of fashion, is almost identical with Oscar Wilde's—the lives of rich, slightly decadent people seen against a background of traditional culture, grand opera, the picture galleries, and the Court; but Wilde was at heart radically sentimental. His wit is ornamental; Firbank's is structural. Wilde is rococo; Firbank is baroque. It is very rarely that Firbank 'makes a joke'. In *The Princess Zoubaroff* there is the much-quoted introduction:

NADINE: My husband.

BLANCHE [*genially*]: I think we've slept together once?.

ADRIAN: I don't remember.

BLANCHE: At the opera. During *Bérénice*.

Even here the real wit is not in the pun, but in Adrian's 'I don't remember'; one of those suddenly illuminated fragments of the commonplace of which Firbank's novels are full and which, Mr. Gerhardi has shown, are not inimitable. Any writer with a more or less dexterous literary sense can evolve 'jokes' without the least exercise of his sense of humour. In his later work the only verbal jokes are the proper names, Mrs. Mouth, Lady Something, Mr. Limpness, etc. The humour is no longer a mosaic of extricable little cubes of wit. It cannot be repeated from mouth to mouth prefaced by any 'Have-you-heard-this-one?'

Floor of copper, floor of gold. . . . Beyond the custom-house door, ajar, the street at sunrise seemed aflame.

'Have you nothing, young man, to declare?'

' . . . Butterflies!'

'Exempt of duty. Pass.'

Floor of silver, floor of pearl. . .

Trailing a muslin net, and laughing for happiness, Charlie Mouth marched into the town.

Oh, Cuna-Cuna! Little city of Lies and Peril! How many careless young nigger boys have gone thus to seal their doom!

But by its nature Firbank's humour defies quotation. Perhaps it is a shade nearer to the abiding and inscrutable wit of the Chinese. It is there to be enjoyed by those who have a taste for it, but it is too individual and intangible to become a literary influence. The importance of Firbank which justifies the writing of a critical essay about him, lies in his literary method. He is the first quite

modern writer to solve for himself, quite unobtrusively and probably more or less unconsciously, the aesthetic problem of representation in fiction; to achieve, that is to say, a new, balanced interrelation of subject and form. Nineteenth-century novelists achieved a balance only by complete submission to the idea of the succession of events in an arbitrarily limited period of time. Just as in painting until the last generation the aesthetically significant activity of the artist had always to be occasioned by anecdote and representation, so the novelist was fettered by the chain of cause and effect. Almost all the important novels of this century have been experiments in making an art form out of this raw material of narration. It is a problem capable of many solutions, of which Firbank discovered one that was peculiarly appropriate and delicate.

His later novels are almost wholly devoid of any attributions of cause to effect; there is the barest minimum of direct description; his compositions are built up, intricately and with a balanced alternation of the wildest extravagance and the most austere economy, with conversational *nuances*. They may be compared to cinema films in which the relation of caption and photograph is directly reversed; occasionally a brief, visual image flashes out to illumine and explain the flickering succession of spoken words.

One sunny May Day morning, full of unrest, Lady Parvula de Pantzoust left the Hotel for a turn on the promenade. It was a morning of pure delight. Great clouds, breaking into dream, swept slowly across the sky, rolling down from the uplands behind Hare Hatch House, above whose crumbling pleasancess one single

sable streak, in the guise of a coal black negress, prognosticated rain.

'Life would be perfect,' she mused. . . .

And the dialogue begins anew.

But nothing could be farther from Firbank's achievement than the 'novel of conversation'. In his dialogue there is no exchange of opinion. His art is purely selective. From the fashionable chatter of his period, vapid and interminable, he has plucked, like tiny brilliant feathers from the breast of a bird, the particles of his design.

'I would give all my soul to him, Rara . . . my chances of heaven!'

'Your chances, Olga——', Mademoiselle de Nazianzi murmured, avoiding some bird-droppings with her skirt

'How I envy *the men*, Rara, in his platoon!'

'Take away his uniform, Olga, and what does he become?'

'Ah, *what*——'

The talk goes on, delicate, chic, exquisitely humorous, and seemingly without point or plan. Then, quite gradually, the reader is aware that a casual reference on one page links up with some particular inflexion of phrase on another until there emerges a plot; usually a plot so outrageous that he distrusts his own inferences. The case of the Ritz Hotel *v.* Lady Something in *The Flower Beneath the Foot* is typical of the Firbank method. The King at a dinner-party employs the expression:

'I could not be more astonished if you told me there were fleas at the Ritz', a part of which assertion Lady Something, who was blandly listening, imperfectly chanced to hear.

'Who would credit it. . . ! It's almost *too* appalling. . . . Fleas have been found at the Ritz.'

Nothing more is said for forty pages, and then:

'Had I known, Lady Something, I was going to be ill, I would have gone to the Ritz!' the Hon. 'Eddy' gasped.

'And you'd have been bitten all over,' Lady Something replied.

Twenty pages pass and then an 'eloquent and moderately victorious young barrister' is mentioned as 'engaged in the approaching suit with the Ritz'. A few pages farther on it is casually observed that the Ritz is empty save for one guest.

In the same way in *Cardinal Pirelli* the scandal of the Cardinal's unorthodox baptism of the Duchesse's pet dog is gradually built up. The actual baptism described; then it is approached circumspectly from another angle, touched and left alone. There is a long scene in the Vatican, apparently without relation to the rest of the story; at the end the Cardinal's name is mentioned; another touch and then retreat. There is a social climber who wants *her* dog to be baptized. Suddenly the Cardinal is in disgrace.

In this way Firbank achieved a new art form primarily as a vehicle for bringing coherence to his own elusive humour. But in doing this he solved the problem which most vexes the novelist of the present time. Other solutions are offered of the same problem, but in them the author has been forced into a subjective attitude to his material; Firbank remained objective and emphasized the fact which his contemporaries were neglecting that the novel should be directed for entertainment. This is the debt which the present generation owes to him.

E. CLARK

## INTERIOR DECORATION

Everything in the garden was lovely. No little draught crept sidling into Quillian's complacency. Phyllis and he were inspecting what he facetiously termed the demesne. And she felt as unenthusiastic as if it had been a conducted tour. He had not, of course, the patronizing air of a King Cophetua—they both had means—or even the rather provoking tricks a Merlin might have been expected to play. Indeed, some impishness might have enlivened the proceedings. Cocksure of himself, and pontifically solemn, it was almost (she couldn't control the blasphemy) as though the Almighty with extended palms were saying: 'Out of the nothingness have I spoken and created, and lo! it is good.' In his own words, it was *the goods*. He asked no question, no approbation. Certainly there was no light in her eyes, no answering gleam, let alone fascinated glance or adoration. Try as she would, she could not get the tiniest spark of interest into her eyes, and she murmured hm's and yes and no in a tired voice. And he was so wrapt in what he had done, how he had planned, seen, and conquered, had wrought everything to his will, that nothing could mar his joy.

They were to be married in the week. As is the way of the world, she had been working, and, because of the approaching marriage, working 'overtime'. Secretary to an invalid friend of her father, most of her time of late had been spent in Switzerland.

*He* had occupied the last eight months planning their home down to the least detail, and was now displaying

the finished article. A rather dubious mixture of the heavy stage Napoleon and an anything but debonair Maskelyne, he strode into the hall, flinging open the door with the precision of a royal flunkey. Phyllis drifted after him, listless, as a withered leaf often seems to follow rather than go with the impetuous breeze. If only he had had a little more impetuosity . . . she was thinking like any schoolgirl . . . of film heroes. . . .

There, alone in its glory, hung the etching. 'Picked up, a plum, you know, at Crowborough's sale. It takes an eye for that sort of thing, especially these days, spotting the winner! Going up daily. Whenever old Octavien pegs out, there'll be a mint in it.' He rubbed his hands together with more than Jewish unction over a bargain, not exactly on the bargain—he wasn't mean—but on his Jackhornery.

He expatiated on everything, from the antique of antique candlesticks to the hot water laid on (like a beastly hotel, she thought) in each room, disguised here as a corner cupboard, here an imitation bookcase. Unfortunately there was nothing vital in his fervour, no ecstasy, nothing communicable, *catching*. The hottest water was arctic, and trickled, trickled down your spine like golden syrup and gave you a goosey feeling. She had continually been hauled over the coals for mixed metaphors at school and college!

There were the Japanese prints he had got for her bedroom, three exquisite things, arranged just so. Again, try as she would, she could not give that little feminine squeal of delight one felt was expected of one. It was all like a still life which, painted by even the most accomplished amateur, leaves one stone cold. Every labour-saving device, that went without saying, if not entirely without



seeing, had been put in. There came into her mind that house of the parable which was swept and garnished only to admit seven devils and in the end was worse than at first. She shivered.

It *was* getting chill and dusk, and with an air of 'I could say much more if only there were time', Quillian said: 'Well, we'd better be toddling off, I reckon, and patronize the muffins'.

They were going through the now quite dark hall. He hadn't, simply hadn't, been able to decide about the lamp. It was one of the few things that had baffled him, where it was so necessary just to have the right touch. Phyllis caught her foot, and stumbled. There was a trap, with a dead mouse.

'Jones told me he would set a few. At this season they come in from the fields. Poor little beggar!'

Poor little beggar? Her epitaph? Caught up in this marriage business. She wondered what in him had attracted her, with his pettifogging ideas, ideals. He was a fussing old maid in reality. Yet she knew she would go through with things. It was her father's, it was her way.

Quillian might propose, yet the gods disposed. As for the goddesses they notoriously were always overstepping the limits! They would, in the end, see what *she* would see! She looked, not without a certain motherliness, at him walking briskly down the drive, still voluble, pointing to right and left, here at the neat tiny Pernettyia, its starry foliage and coralline berries, there to the most dressy and spacious of white lilacs.

'Poor little beggar!' she said, with a sharpness which caused him to waver for a moment in his stride.

OLIVER BRETT

## LITERARY REPUTATION

The collector of books may at the same time be a critic of their contents. Often, however, he has no pretensions to be a judge of good literature, buying what he is told to buy and following the great names. Sometimes he is not even a reader of the books he buys, treating them as if they were stamps, and hoarding their unopened rarity as in itself a supreme merit. But if the collector is not necessarily a critic he cannot help acquiring a profound knowledge of literary reputations. Like a stockbroker, he may not know whether there is any gold in a mine, but he does know to a shade what the public thinks of the mine's prospects. He feels perpetually the breeze of public opinion, varied, altered and modified as it is by criticism, conversation, fashion, and the spirit of the age.

It is always exceedingly difficult to find a pattern in contemporary criticism. The trend of critical opinion is continually deflected by its personal preferences, and although it always contains within it the elements of a 'school', which no doubt will be clear enough to posterity, the strong personality of a few critics is sufficient to disguise from all but the most astute any such definite tendency. On the other hand, the herd-like movements of the reading public, so obvious to the eye of the collector, are definite. The reading public has none of the doubts and qualifications characteristic of expert experience; it knows exactly what it likes, even if it cannot give the reasons for its liking, and it is never afraid to act upon its opinion, secured as such opinion is by being so

widely held. It is often difficult enough to account for its vagaries, but it is easy and perhaps not uninteresting to note them, depending, as they appear to do, so little upon the professional guidance of the critic.

It is curious, for instance, that eighteenth-century poetry has always been in great demand by book collectors, while its prose has been neglected. Pope, Gray, Collins, Cowper, and Burns have been greedily absorbed, while all the praise of past generations of critics has failed to excite wide interest among them, even in the famous novelists of that century. Quite recently, however, and for no apparent reason, a boom in eighteenth-century prose has begun. *Tom Jones*, which a few years ago could be bought for £17, can now be sold for £170, and Boswell's *Life of Johnson* has risen from £15 to £120. No one can account either for the neglect or for the conversion. It is a sort of irresistible tide, and everything around it shares in its beneficent effect. Not only Johnson, Fielding, Sterne, Richardson and Smollett, but Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, and even so recondite a work as Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* suddenly become desirable and therefore expensive acquisitions.

It might be argued that ultimately, after continual reiteration, the thick head of the reading public had been sufficiently penetrated to take the advice of the critics. When we turn, however, to the Victorian age we find an opposite and equally unaccountable process has taken place. The prolonged attack of the critics on the Victorians succeeded in destroying the public interest in their poetry, but had no effect whatever upon the public estimation of the Victorian novelists. Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, and Swinburne have lost their market value,

while Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, and Disraeli are eagerly collected. No doubt there are exceptions to this rule. George Eliot and Meredith have succumbed to the critical attack. But we are faced with the strange fact that the reading public can still find pleasure in the sentiment of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, while it cannot abide the romance of *The Idylls of the King*.

Sometimes, however, it is possible to trace the causes that underlie these strange changes in fashion and taste. Sir Walter Scott, for instance, whose values lag behind those of Jane Austen and the Brontës, has always had against him the inveterate and mobilized dislike of all women, who are unable to read his books. Byron suffered throughout the nineteenth century from the rumour of his profligacy, and has only lately begun to recover in this age of lax morality. Carlyle declined rapidly as the political feeling against Germany increased and the international danger of his philosophic ideas about the heroic became apparent. On the other hand, Disraeli and Trollope took on, as time went by, that attribute of the picturesque which is so valuable an element in achieving popularity. They seemed to provide 'a picture of the time', which, in spite of all the cold water showered upon him by literary high-brows, is the secret of Mr. Galsworthy's success. Hardy, too, was helped to retain his place by his long survival into a different age, becoming the grand old man of letters, with a personal prestige that made him, apart from his writings, 'news' in the eyes of the Press.

Yet the effects of such factors are by no means invariable, and no clear rule can be derived from them. The reaction against the ideas of Carlyle has been no greater than the reaction against the ideas of Mr. Kipling.

Militant imperialism, bombastic and arrogant, may be considered to be as dead as it is possible for any literary tradition to be. Mr. Kipling himself has led a retired personal life and 'news' about him has been very scarce. By all anticipation and precedent the peace should have submerged Mr. Kipling, and indeed, no post-war critic under forty can tolerate such complacent optimism. Yet every collector knows that Mr. Kipling is far the most valuable of living writers. At public auction his rarer books fetch the most fantastic prices, and the hundreds of small pamphlets necessary to a complete collection of his works are sought after and treasured as pearls of literary merit.

The opinion of the reading public about living writers is naturally more difficult to ascertain than its attitude towards the sifted reputations of the past. Small sets of intellectual people will pin their faith upon some young man and give a fictitious value to his early works. A successful play, such as Mr. John Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln*, will send the collectors headlong after his other books. A book with a wide appeal, such as Mr. Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, will enhance the value of his previous thin volumes of poetry. This latter book, indeed, itself attained for a time an artificial scarcity, since many booksellers, deceived by its title and its anonymity, circularized the squires of Leicestershire instead of the collectors of Sassoon. Again, the topical and political interest of such a book as Mr. E. M. Forster's *Passage to India* is sufficient to establish the value of his unrecognized masterpiece *Howard's End*. The living writer does not stand like the dead to be judged only by his work. His personality and opinions, his place in the social life of his time count for or against him in the book

market. Mr. Bernard Shaw is an obvious example. During most of his career it has amused him to antagonize the public, to air opinions widely reputed to be dangerous and subversive, and therefore, although he has been even more than Hardy 'news' to the Press, the reading public has steadily refused to admit that he was a great writer. Gradually, however, his ideas, following the usual cooling process of such phenomena, seemed less and less revolutionary, until suddenly, when Hardy died, Mr. Shaw stepped benignly into the vacant place as the grand old man of English letters. The effect of this canonization was immediate; within a year *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* had risen from £2 to £36 and *The Unsocial Socialist* from £4 to £95.

Nevertheless, the public estimation of living writers can be gauged by collectors who are sufficiently intelligent to ignore such extraneous accidents. Broadly speaking, Sir James Barrie, Mr. Arnold Bennett, Mr. Galsworthy, Mr. A. E. Housman, and Mr. Masfield are the favourites of the reading public. No one can explain why other writers of the same class, Mr. Belloc, Mr. Bridges, Mr. Chesterton, and Mr. Wells have failed to qualify for a like position. Such discrimination is quite incalculable. Sometimes the enthusiasm of other writers, such as that felt by Mr. Michael Sadlier and Mr. Hugh Walpole for Trollope, will increase an author's value. Sometimes an organized campaign in the book-selling trade will, as lately in the case of Herman Melville, create a sudden but short-lived boom. Sometimes a tablet in Hyde Park will make the collector believe that the public will go on reading books about birds, and for a short time the values of Hudson will be unaccountably far greater than those

of Richard Jefferies. Such gusts of popularity rise up and die away. The Forsytes, the Five Towns, Peter Pan, Reynard the Fox, and the Shropshire Lad remain permanently undisturbed.

All art is subject to fashion, and the cautious collector will avoid joining the crowd who rush after the high-priced favourites. Still less will he pay the large sums necessary to procure the rare pamphlets of young poets still fledglings in the nest of literature, and compete with some dozen others who have also heard of a particular and as yet unrecognized idol. It can only be fashion that places the value of Mr. Blunden, Mr. James Stephens, or even of Mr. T. S. Eliot above that of Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne, and the fashion will change. Certainly the Victorian poets will revive, and, with a few exceptions, they are still cheap. It can only be fashion again that places Mr. Joyce, Mr. Aldous Huxley, Mr. D. H. Lawrence, and the Sitwells higher than the decadents of the 'nineties. It is true that contemporary putrescence is not sugared over with a thin veneer of Victorian romance, but *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is just as false and clever as *Point Counter Point*, and the younger school has yet to produce lyrics that reach the standard set by Ernest Dowson's 'Cynara', or Lord Alfred Douglas's 'Sonnet to a Dead Poet'.

Quite lately the writer was showing to an intelligent young bookseller a rare little pamphlet called *The Italian Horror and How to End It*, by Wilfred Blunt. The bookseller had never heard of Wilfred Blunt, a poet whose reputation in his day was comparable to that now enjoyed by Mr. Walter de la Mare. The following is from *The Love Sonnets of Proteus*:

I long have had a quarrel set with Time  
Because he robbed me. Every day of life  
Was wrested from me after bitter strife.  
I never yet could see the sun go down  
But I was angry in my heart, nor hear  
The leaves fall in the wind without a tear  
Over the dying summer. I have known  
No truce with Time, nor, Time's accomplice, Death.  
The fair world is the witness of a crime  
Repeated every hour. For life and breath  
Are sweet to all who live; and bitterly  
The voices of these robbers of the heath  
Sound in each ear and chill the passer by.  
—What have we done to thee, thou monstrous Time?  
What have we done to Death that we must die?

Nor is the case of Wilfred Blunt unique. The present generation seems blind to everything, with the exception of the work of some writers who have survived themselves into the twentieth century, written between 1880 and 1900. It is not that the reading public dislikes the work of that period; it does not seem to be aware, that it exists. Here, then, is the opportunity for the wise collector, using his taste and judgement among a mass of forgotten writers. It is true that Stevenson and Gissing are already expensive, but the rest can be purchased for a song. Even if the collector does not care for Oscar Wilde and the decadent school of the 'nineties, cheap as they are compared with the neo-decadent school of Mr. Joyce, he still has wide opportunities of selection. The novels of Henry James, the prose of Austin Dobson, Pater, Edmund Gosse, Augustine Birrell, Andrew Lang, Vernon Lee, Richard Jefferies and Kenneth Grahame, the poetry of W. E.



Henley, Alice Meynell, Francis Thompson, Lionel Johnson, William Watson, John Davidson, Robert Bridges, and Laurence Binyon. There are many others; the field is large and empty; and for the price of Mr. James Stephens's *Crock of Gold* the careful purchaser can choose a shelf-full of books which may contain the great reputations of to-morrow. At any rate it is certain that the risk that he may be proved wrong in twenty years is no greater, while his financial loss would be infinitely less, than it would be if he concentrated his attention upon these contemporary writers who loom so large in the public eye. For the next generation will in turn forget them.

DESMOND MACCARTHY

## IN THE MARGIN OF PROUST

*A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* is a book without a beginning or an end. It is the longest novel in the world—more than twice the length of *War and Peace*, *Clarissa Harlowe*, or *Don Quixote*, or 'Rabelais', and yet there is no reason why it should not be ten times as long as it is. Its opening sentence: 'For a long time I used to go to bed early' and the unpacking of the implications in that statement might have occurred at any point in its development. Though the characters are old in the last volume and the transformations in them wrought by age are wonderfully described, there is nothing in the author's method to have prevented him, had he lived, from then harking back and describing scenes in which they were all rejuvenated again. They have been described at dates out of chronological order before this point is reached. Sometimes the narrator who records his impressions is again a child, after his childhood has been left behind. Proust's method (in this it is entirely original) rests upon a postulate that the whole of every life, not only his own, but those of others, lies spread out before the observer; so that while he is contemplating a situation, say, in some one's middle-life, the artist can look before or after, and see both what had happened and what was about to happen to that person or to himself. Life in the Proustian world is like a book, to any particular page in which we can turn at any moment we choose. It is already written. We do, as a matter of fact, often read the present in the light of the past, when our impressions are immensely enriched; and

the interest of any situation is intensified by remembering what has happened. But in real life we do not know what is going to happen to anybody, and therefore we cannot enrich the interest of the moment by contemplating the future alongside of it. But suppose the whole of life were really spread out before us like a picture, it would often be a gain to consider incident F not in its place between E and G, as it actually occurred in time, but say between B and Z. There would often be a gain in irony, and often in the understanding of character and of life itself, through such arbitrary juxtapositions. This is Proust's method; and this is what is meant by his constructing his story out of 'blocks of time' (*vide* Mr. Clive Bell's *Proust*, Hogarth Press). Only Mr. Clive Bell, since he both thinks the book a work of art and holds particular aesthetic views as to the nature of every work of art, leaves the reader to suppose that the book is architecturally constructed; that it has a unity which can be grasped when one stands back from it. As a matter of fact, *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* resembles anything rather than a building, a pattern, or a picture; it is more like a plant and, too, such a plant as the prickly-pear, in which leaves grow out of each other instead of from the branches attached to a stem. It is shapeless. If it is criticized from the point of view from which such novels as *Persuasion*, *Adolphe*, *Eugenie Grandet* appear as masterpieces, from the point of view of form, it is a thoroughly bad novel. Such unity as it possesses lies in the temperament of the author and the trend of his intention. His intention is to explore to their farthest recesses the mysteries of sensibility *as a means of penetrating to an absolute knowledge of human beings*. Proust's aim is knowledge, not in the first place the creation of 'form'. That, nevertheless, 'a work of art' would be the by-

product of seeking knowledge in a certain spirit, was a belief which, after constantly eluding him, he did at last attain; and having once attained it, he never lost the faith that if only he stared hard enough at any object, examined carefully enough any fragment of experience, these things would deliver up their meaning, and that this truth would be equivalent to a work of art.

Resting as it does on personal intuition and sensibility, careless as it is of form and proportion, indifferent as it is to external standards of value whether of common sense or current morality, the work of Proust is entirely and extravagantly romantic.

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The style: immensely long sentences, crammed with parentheses (much longer than those of Henry James) and with comments upon comments. Few of these long sentences are 'periods', for the statements they contain are not arranged so that the most important ones stand out; nor does the delayed conclusion often add weight to the whole sentence, though sometimes it does. As a rule, however, a page of Proust is no more 'composed' than the volume in which it occurs. Proust has been too set upon catching every association as it wings its way across his mind and upon pinning it down *at once*, to care whether he is complicating the drift of his sentences.

He refuses to employ those orotund rhythms which are an aid to clarity, and to which Henry James trusted to carry him through a press of metaphors and hints. Nor are Proust's digressions artful like Sterne's; they are purely explanatory. But 'the stuff' contained in them is usually subtle, exact and exciting in a high degree, and the justification of a style, which would otherwise be

abominable, is that it carries as a rule so much along with it. (Sometimes, too, there are long descriptive passages of marked idiosyncratic beauty.) If Proust were a thin writer he would be a bad writer—and in places where he does run thin he is; but in these great dragging nets of words all sorts of lovely and strange impressions are hauled into sight, such as the angler with his line could never have captured. Like the later style of Henry James, it is a thinking-aloud style, which is always more difficult to follow than one addressed to an audience. And since it is easy to lose one's way in these long sentences we should be grateful for Mr. Scott-Moncrieff's excellent translations—in one's own language it is easier to find again the noun or verb which one has forgotten. *Swann's Way*, (two volumes), *Within a Budding Grove* (two volumes), *The Guermande's Way* (two volumes), are published by Chatto & Windus; the next two volumes, *Cities of the Plain*, are coming out this month and are published by Knopf. There are three more volumes to come. Frenchmen often complain of being obliged to read a sentence by Proust three or four times. But the reward of reading him attentively is great. Some French critics also assert that there is a fine rhythm in his prose; others defy these critics to read certain pages aloud in such a manner as to prove it. On this point very few foreigners are competent to take sides.

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*A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* presents us with a new view both of the external world and the world within us. Obviously this is the reason why the book has made such a tremendous stir. In its focus of attention, in its scale of values it is as 'new' as, say, the work of Tolstoy or

Dostoievsky once was to Europe outside Russia. The originality of its content therefore justifies the originality of its form, for when content has no precedent it is impossible to assert confidently that it could have been presented otherwise. When *Du Côté de chez Swann* first appeared there was a silence. But once appreciation began to find expression, it increased at an unheard-of rate, being echoed and re-echoed from quarters of the literary globe most opposed to each other in taste and philosophy. Mr. Middleton Murry, in his contribution to *Homage à Marcel Proust*, remarked, in connexion with the comparison of Proust to Saint-Simon (the resemblances are superficial), that it would be more pointful in one respect to compare him to Rousseau: the salient fact about him was that he had discovered new forms of sensibility. Rousseau made people in the eighteenth century attend to emotions and impressions they had felt, but ignored as unimportant, and thus discover new sources of interest, satisfaction, and excitement. Proust, also, revealed to his contemporaries, and especially to his juniors whose sense of proportion was not already set, new ways of responding to experience. They suddenly became aware of interesting and subtle complications in what had seemed flat, colourless bits of life. They not only found themselves in his pages, but also that to read him was to learn how to intensify the pleasures of self-consciousness, and make the very pains involved in sensitive self-consciousness sources at least of new interests. Whether Proust's interpretation of experience is better than others which have found expression in works of art is another question; but it is a new one, and one which has already begun to influence other interpreters. Personally, nothing would induce me to *live* in Proust's world, but I like to visit it.

And just as one can sharpen one's perceptions of certain aspects of things by gazing attentively at the pictures of some modern artist, without necessarily holding that he saw more beauty than some familiar master whose work in those respects is a blank, so can one learn to observe and feel like Proust without believing that he has interpreted life better than other writers who ignore what was to him important.

\* \* \* \*

Proust's world is that of the searching, inquisitive, intellectual artist. This will make his work survive, in spite of his delusion that mankind has unlimited time for reading. His book has no story; what happened next is comparatively unimportant. Nor is it his object, though the form of his book is more or less that of a memoir, to draw a picture of himself. He himself as a character, the outline of which can be clearly apprehended, is perhaps the most indefinite figure in it. His book is a voyage of discovery in his own soul. He is an artist who believes that the external world can only be seen clearly and understood by examining with the most minute attention the reflection of things in his own memory. He is a Lady of Shalott who never takes her eyes off a magic mirror. He has little communication with the external world except through this converse with reflected things and people. 'Art is nature seen through a temperament'—that is true of all art. But the peculiarity of Proust is that he does not check his own impressions by the common stock of experience which mankind has accumulated. He trusts only his own. It is a question of degree. All novels are, of course, made out of memories and impressions, but Proust is the most extravagantly 'subjective' of all

novelists; only a few poets have exhibited an equal degree of subjectivity. 'No one is wiser than everybody'—such a saying as that would be complete nonsense to Proust. A great part of an artist's life, of his labour, consists in working through the impressions and judgements which he has taken from others till he reaches what he alone has felt. To record and convey that, is obviously his only chance of being original and of contributing anything new to the common stock of experience. But it is equally obvious that such contributions may be worthlessly idiosyncratic. Most writers and artists have been aware of this horrible danger, and have striven to keep in touch with the reports of mankind as to the nature and importance of what they describe. It is possible to produce fine works of art by never going beyond common experiences which are generally accepted and immediately recognized; perhaps the greatest are those in which the strictly personal element is small, and the most blessed artist the one who, apart from his shaping power of imagination, is born a man like ordinary men. Proust was far from being such an artist.

His sensitiveness is extraordinary, often morbid; but what prevents his sensations being either so idiosyncratic, or so morbid, as to be uninteresting is that this peculiar sensitiveness is accompanied by an equal intensity of intellectual attention. The whole of this vast piece of fiction vibrates and quivers with a passionate intellectual curiosity, and this brings the author into touch with readers who would not otherwise feel his peculiar aesthetic and emotional experience. Another curious characteristic in him is the way in which his emotional responses are retarded. He only knows, or thinks he only knows, afterwards, what has happened to him sometimes



long afterwards. It is certainly true of most of us that we only see clearly on looking back; but in Proust's case feeling itself is much more a matter of *seeing* and *understanding* than it is with normal people. (He is an artist.) In the last volume of *Le Temps Retrouvé*, he says, 'les vrais paradis sont les paradis qu'on a perdus'. That, or the equivalent of that, has been said before, but the significance of it in his case is peculiar. It is not remembered happiness that has for him this thrilling beauty in retrospect, for that phrase implies that happiness has actually once been experienced. With the exception of certain childish memories and a particular class of experiences—purely aesthetic, musical and visual—the narrator has never tasted that happiness which he remembers. He is never conscious of the value of anything till its absence or destruction informs him that it was very precious to him: love is experienced poignantly only in the form of jealousy or estrangement; death when suddenly, perhaps on some trivial occasion such as undoing his boots a year afterwards, an association brings home to him overwhelmingly his loss. Hence the principal and most pervasive defect in Proust's picture of life. The description of the death of his grandmother has been greatly admired; it is terrible and extraordinarily vivid. But compare it to, say, the death of Levin's brother in *Anna Karenina*, and it will be seen at once that something very important is absent. Tolstoy's description of the death of a beloved person is just as completely observed, but it is the description of one who felt the tragedy and awfulness *at the time*. In Proust's death-bed scene there is, in contrast, something disconcertingly unbeautiful and cold, something one does not like. And this defect is still more noticeable in the love-affair of the narrator and Albertine which

takes up such an enormous space in the book. When Albertine is with him he feels nothing. Even his physical relations with her are of the most trivial importance to him, and he does not care a straw about her as a human being. He has just informed her casually that they had better part (*The Cities of the Plain*), when her mention of a particular woman suggests to him that she may have had with her relations of a sinister nature, and instantly he feels he cannot lose Albertine. This is one of the dramatic turns in the book, and it is a passage of which, I have heard, Proust himself was particularly proud. *La Prisonnière*, which follows, is chiefly composed of the agonies of jealousy and uncertainty he suffers henceforward on Albertine's account. The greater part of that volume contains a minute account of sufferings similar to those attributed to Swann in *Du Côté de chez Swann*, where jealousy, if not 'done' better, is at least described more briefly. Albertine herself brings him no happiness, but when she is asleep by his side there is a halcyon lull in his torture. (The passage which describes her asleep and his feelings at that moment is rightly famous.) But how can we care greatly, or be interested for so long together, in the sufferings of a man who has lost what, when he possessed it, was of no value to him? Wordsworth's sonnet

Surprised by joy—impatient as the Wind  
I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom

is moving because we believe he had shared transports with her who was dead. Proust shared his transports with nobody; we cannot, therefore, be deeply moved by his bereavements.

(*To be continued*)

## READERS' REPORTS

*The America of To-day*, by J. A. Spender (Benn. 12s. 6d.). Mr. Spender leaves the average British reader convinced of truths that he had only hitherto suspected. For the standard of living that it has brought to all workers; for its abundant energy; for its absence of caste; and for its astonishing assimilation of all races, American civilization is great and will rank as such in history. Of this fact the analysis of so experienced an observer contained in 'Part II: Life and Institutions' leaves no doubt. And the book may therefore rank as a minor complement to M. André Siegfried's *America Comes of Age*, which left most formidable doubts. But whereas M. Siegfried convinced with his Gallic detachment, Mr. Spender wearies with excessive timidity. Americans, he says, resent criticism. Perhaps they do. The European can only reply that the sooner they discard this vulnerable dignity, the happier will be their relations with the rest of the world. Their state is no precarious Fascism, but a triumphant addition to the world's well-being. Cannot they therefore afford to admit their ruthless disregard of the unemployed and unemployable, their barbarous Christianities, their inhuman methods of justice, and their absolute intellectual submission to the mass? These are the price of prosperity and doubtless worth paying. But Mr. Spender shies off them like a Victorian mother telling her daughter that storks bring babies. His emphasis of the achievement loses force by underestimation of the loss. At times he sells his birthright altogether: 'The old European view inherited from Platonists and ecclesiastics that there is

something vulgar about money simply does not exist for these men'. This, then, is a matter for congratulation.

The third section of the book, however, provides a most excellent summary of British-American relations and the peculiar temperamental relations that influence them. The American view of Europe, hard of our understanding as the Chinese, is much the same as Europe's view of the Balkans. The reasons for this Mr. Spender explains in a manner calculated to evoke sympathy. But he does not scruple, in this case, to set forth the British point of view also. If his exposition of this is as convincing to Americans as that of theirs to us, it is to be hoped that the book will also be read on the other side of the Atlantic.

In *England and the Octopus* (Bles. 6s.), Mr. Clough Williams-Ellis, the architect, gives a timely warning to all who care for the amenities and beauties of the English countryside. The work of devastation has increased in such an alarming fashion since the war, that if it is allowed to continue unchecked for a few more years, we must expect every town to be surrounded by a growth of miserable villas, stretching far beyond the urban boundaries into the fields. The example of Oxford is enough to make any one shudder, but Mr. Williams-Ellis prints in an appendix a collection of photographs illustrating even more hideous examples of the Octopus's work. On the whole, it appears that we are extraordinarily callous about the preservation of the land we love, for although we do not actually tolerate the attempt of jerry-builders and garage proprietors to despoil it of its natural charms, we make very little effort to prevent them. There are, for instance, societies making this effort, whose work we

admire but do not support, individuals whose generosity has saved tracts of land from the speculator, whom we do not try to emulate. In fact, the general public is content to let things slide, and if a benefactor hands over to the nation some beauty spot, it applauds and after proceeds to litter the ground with waste paper and orange peel. It is not enough, as Mr. Williams-Ellis points out, for a few wealthy people to do for us what we could do for ourselves with concerted effort. A visit to Welwyn Garden City will show what can be done by a group of intelligent people, who, in building a town, have yet preserved the natural amenities of the site. A hint thrown out by Mr. Williams-Ellis that we should boycott all obnoxious petrol stations and hotels, would go far towards educating public opinion. An asbestos tea-shack would soon be forced to close down if tourists refused to patronize it.

Mr. Williams-Ellis is at present crying in the wilderness, and because his cries have far to go they are often harsh and strident. There is some overstatement in his book, and a great deal of vigorous blasting and denunciation, but the message it contains is clear and of great import, and deserves the attention of every man, woman and child in every station of life.

*The Oxford Book of Regency Verse (1798-1837). Chosen by H. S. Milford (Oxford University Press. 8s. 6d.).* This anthology covers one of the richest and the best known periods in English literature. Blake, Wordsworth, Scott, Coleridge, Byron, Keats, Tennyson, Browning; even those who stopped reading poetry when they left school are familiar with that group of names, and it is inevitable, as Mr. Milford points out, that one-half of his book should be filled with poems that 'all readers will know, and

many will know by heart'. So to criticize his choice would be carping, and on the whole he has chosen admirably. Scott and Byron, for instance, come off more gloriously than they might easily have done with a less sympathetic chooser. Blake is unfortunate, for his 'Songs of Innocence' and 'Songs of Experience' are ruled out by the opening date of the anthology (1798), just as, at the other end of the volume, Tennyson and Browning are done less than justice by the closing of the period at 1837. The Regency was an arbitrary kind of thing to build an anthology round, but probably not more arbitrary than an editor's personal taste, and any book must begin somewhere and stop somewhere else.

It is, then, by his treatment of the minors writing between those two dates that we must estimate the value of Mr. Milford's selection. He complains that they are 'so very minor', and, indeed, many of them echoed, with much the success of an early gramophone, the notes and sentiments of their greater contemporaries. But most readers will, I think, find more than they expected, and some will have to revise their judgements of Hood, Darley, Peacock, or Clare, to name a few at random. While the mere poetasters suffer from the proximity of Shelley and his peers, Peacock, and some others, gain, for we realize that they had an individuality of their own, and, on a smaller scale, were just as truly poets. And then, among these lesser writers, one traces more clearly than among the giants the gradual breaking away from the eighteenth-century tradition, and the development of the movement previously illustrated in the *Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*.

It is with Crabbe, who comes somewhere between the Majors and the Minors, that Mr. Milford has been least

successful, but then Crabbe takes a lot of knowing, and seldom gets it. He had another vein besides the prosaic-realistic one, which is all we get here. The 'World of Dreams' should certainly have been included, to give the full measure of his powers, and the 'Convict's Dream', in the *Borough*, Letter XXIII, the dream on the night preceding his execution, with this passage:

Then cross the bounding brook they make their way  
O'er its rough bridge—and there behold the bay!  
The ocean smiling to the fervid sun—  
The waves that faintly fall and slowly run—  
The ships at distance and the boats at hand;  
And now they walk upon the seaside sand,  
Counting the number and what kind they be,  
Ships softly sinking in the sleepy sea,

and the close, so dramatic despite its conventional wording:

Oh! horrible! a wave  
Roars as it rises—'Save me, Edward, save!'  
She cries:—Alas! the watchman on his way  
Calls and lets in—truth, terror, and the day.

*The Turkish Ordeal*, by Halidé Edib (John Murray. 21s.). For those who have studied the problems of the Levant, the history of the Turks between the years 1918 and 1922, the period covered by this second volume of Halidé Hanum's memoirs, must arouse a conflict of feeling. Not even the warmest apologist of that people can deny that, with their advent in the eleventh century, the civilization and prosperity of Asia Minor were destroyed; that with their capture of Constantinople, four centuries later, a culture was extinguished which might have saved Europe

from the religious jealousy and illiberal classicism that then overtook her; and that, with the Sultan's armies encamped before Vienna in 1683 and his frontier scarcely fifty miles away, the proper development of her middle peoples was stunted for two hundred years longer. In this age, when European civilization has enveloped the universe and European vitality and resource are most needed to maintain the European individualist ideal, it has been difficult not to regret the misfortune of the Turk's first coming and his protracted and unreasonable survival in the Byzantine capital by means of the Byzantine political organization which he borrowed. At the end of the War it was confidently expected that some of the damage might be undone and some measure taken to revivify the Levant and give opportunity for self-development to its Christian populations. The trustees of these expectations were Lloyd George and Venizelos. The outcome of their activities between 1918 and 1922 was to avert the proposed rehabilitation of the Near East for many years; to cause devastation and loss of life on a scale unknown even in that region; and to engineer the most futile and treacherous passage in modern British history. These events had two pivots: the conference-rooms of the Western Powers; and the headquarters of the Turkish Nationalists. For nearly four years, from her flight, disguised and by night, from Constantinople, to her share in the triumphant entry into Smyrna, Halidé Hanum was the Joan of Arc and Mrs. Pankhurst of the latter.

She was already famous as an emancipator of her countrywomen, as a professor of Western literature at the Turkish university in Constantinople, and as a novelist. With the pen of the latter she recounts the chronology of events as she herself took part in them, though simul-



taneously disclaiming the political importance as the woman behind the scenes which journalists have thrust upon her. The account opens in Constantinople, with the allied troops misbehaving and encouraging the Greeks and Armenians to behave still worse. The Sultan is hoping, at best, for a British protectorate. Parliament is dissolved. Prominent officials are deported by the British to Malta. But the East and centre of Anatolia show symptoms of resistance to this foreign domination. Mustafa Kemal Pasha, dispatched as a pacificator, joins the Nationalists of these districts, whose cause is fortified a hundredfold by the Greek landing and atrocities at Smyrna in May 1919. Halidé Hanum, marked for her political speeches, takes flight, to arrive, after the adventures of a cinema heroine in avoiding the English outposts, at Angora and play her part in the formation of a new government and the organization of a new Turkey.

Everything depended, though she does not greatly admire him, on the insuperable vitality of Kemal. First the anti-Nationalists, Turks themselves attached to the Califate and Sultanate, threaten this nucleus of godless intelligentsia in Angora. Halidé Hanum types news and propaganda on an old machine till her eyes are blind. Then the Greek army arrives within thirty miles of the town and the notables flee. She remains, riding to and from her village on the outskirts. At length she joins the army. It is a gesture; for the Anatolian women alone have made the war possible: tilling, sowing, and carrying the ammunition. The tide turns. The army formed out of robber bands has beaten the Greeks with the English behind them. And on the historic ninth of September, 1922, she enters Smyrna by motor with the other leaders. Then, suddenly, she breaks off. She has shown the Turk,

defeated and despised in 1918, fighting to retain the lands in Asia Minor that were the first conquest and last heritage of the tribe of Osman. As an instrument of massacre and destruction he is too familiar. Of the sack of Smyrna she does not tell.

This is the outline. The details are of the Anatolian countryside, of village life and people, of long rides over the brown ranges, of storms and sunsets, of dripping clothes and wooden beds and bugs. She writes in English: all the clichés of the female publicist are let loose. But for the most part her style is clear, relevant and unpretentious, and her words make pictures. Dr. Refik Bey's yellow cat, Kadifé Hanum or Mrs. Velvet, 'who ruled him with all the tyranny and caprice of which a cat is capable', brings life to a struggling Angora official. The similes are strengthened by Western allusion, both literary and historical. Finally, the sex appeal of a village beauty, over whom the few remaining men are fighting, is poignantly conjured in terms of Tallulah Bankhead's eyes.

*William, Prince of Orange, 1650-1673 (afterwards King of England). Being an Account of His Early Life to his Twenty-fourth Year. By Marjorie Bowen (John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd.).* A life of William III is a sad lack in English biography. The story of his youth and rise to power in the Dutch Republic is almost unknown to English people, and therefore the title of the volume before us raised hopes of a new contribution to our knowledge of a country and a person so closely concerned with our own history of the Restoration period. Miss Bowen has already made known to us the character and chief exploits of her hero in three excellent novels. But the very excellences of a

novelist are often the deficiencies of an historian. A work of the size (300 pages) and scope of the present volume, which purports to tell the story of the youth of William III in considerable detail, and also, in outline at any rate, the political history of the Dutch Republic during a very complicated and momentous period (1650-73), ought to be much more carefully documented than this book. Miss Bowen tells us that her concern is with personality and 'destiny', and she throws down a gage to the dry-as-dust historians. But not even this plea can excuse inaccurate statements of fact, leading often to unsound judgements on conduct. We fear that Miss Bowen has herself fallen into the error which she blames in others who have written on the same period: she has failed 'to sift her materials or probe their accuracy'.

Her list of general authorities given in the preface is very incomplete. She does not mention Dr. Japikse's authoritative work on John De Witt, so much more indispensable than Pontalis's inaccurate tomes, or the fine edition of that statesman's correspondence, brought out by Fruin and Japikse, which should be a main authority. Such important contemporary histories as Sylvius, Valckenier and Basnage are not mentioned, while Mignet's invaluable *Documents Inédits* for the diplomatic history of the whole period is apparently disregarded. Nor has research in archives atoned for what is lacking in printed authorities.

Inaccuracy in detail is of small significance, but where it leads to false judgements on persons and their actions it must not be allowed to pass. To take one instance only. Miss Bowen tells us (without giving us her authority) that at the height of Louis XIV's invasion of the Republic in the summer of 1672, De Witt, the chief minister of

Holland, lost heart, declared the country lost, and himself urged that embassies seeking peace should be sent at once to England and to the French King. A glance at De Witt's own letters would have shown her that she is doing him a gross injustice. His own policy, which he failed to impress on the States, was very different—namely 'to establish the *sedem imperii* within Amsterdam . . . and from that place, as from the heart . . . dispute the country with the enemy to the last man with a Batavian fortitude'. The decision to negotiate with the enemy was taken by the States of Holland against the strenuous opposition of De Witt, whose influence was waning, and who wrote to his brother on the subject: 'I can conceive no good result therefrom'. The story of his having given up hope is found in Wicquefort's *Histoire des Provinces Unies*, an unreliable, though clever and readable work.

Another strange blunder is the statement that the Triple Alliance of 1668 was 'a countermove in the name of Protestantism and Liberty against this Roman Catholic aggression of an absolute monarch'. That Louis XIV's invasion of the Spanish Netherlands in 1667 was due to religious bigotry is, of course, out of the question, as Spain was, if possible, more resolutely Catholic than France at the time. The 'persecuting age' of Louis XIV did not come into force until the 'eighties. Even the invasion of Holland in 1672 was not remarkable for particularly savage treatment of Protestants. The motives of Temple and De Witt in making the Triple Alliance was simply to maintain the balance of power and check French territorial ambition.

When dealing with the Prince of Orange Miss Bowen is certainly on surer ground, and the merits she claims for him, especially in the critical years 1672 and 1673 are not

to be denied. The story of his lonely, difficult childhood, his strict and quaint education, his carefully guarded relations with his uncle, Charles II, and with the great John De Witt, is one of singular interest. The quotations given from his correspondence on military affairs with his cousin, Prince John Maurice, during the defence of the frontier of Holland in 1672, show in a remarkable manner the sort of life and the constant pressing military problems with which the Prince was faced in his twenty-second year. The whole correspondence (in French) may be read in Groen van Prinsterer's *Archives de la Maison Orange-Nassau*, Vol. V. The story of the 'massacre of the De Witts' is well and correctly told, save that the date is wrong. The Prince's firmness in breaking off the negotiations for peace with France and England in the summer of 1672 is given much prominence, and, indeed, the facts are striking enough, even when stripped of such picturesque legends as the one here given, that he addressed the States-General in an impassioned manner for three hours.

The portraits, of which there are sixteen, are excellent, especially those showing the Prince as a child and young man, which are little known in England. It is a pity that more care has not been taken with other details, such as the correct spelling of Dutch proper names, and the provision of an index and maps.

*Six British Soldiers*, by Sir John Fortescue (Williams & Norgate. 12s. 6d.). This book will appeal at once not only to soldiers, but to any student of the troubled history of the British Army. The essays are short, easy to read, and the author is an expert on his subject. The military careers of Cromwell, Marlborough, and Wellington are well known, but Sir John Fortescue has successfully compressed his

abundant material into a vivid and interesting picture of military life. The other three, Abercromby, Stuart, and Moore, are subjects less familiar to the ordinary reader, who will be pleased to be told things that he does not know already. The author has a glaring anti-Whig bias; in his view, a politician of that persuasion can never do right. But as history is generally written under the illusion that a Tory politician can never do right, it does no harm to see the balance kept. The essays are full of interesting detail, and can be thoroughly recommended to those who have even the faintest interest in wars and those who fight them.

*An International Language. Otto Jespersen. (George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. 4s. 6d. net.)* I have a sentimental prejudice against international languages. On the other hand, I make a point of reading everything that Professor Jespersen writes, as much for the entertainment as for the instruction I get. This book gives a brief defence and history of artificial languages, followed by the author's own experiment, called Novial. He has, of course, the advantage of possessing an exceptional knowledge of the mechanism and philosophy of language in general. Broadly speaking, Novial has a preponderantly Romance vocabulary, and a preponderantly English grammar. A Romance speaker, or an educated Teuton or Slav, would pick it up very quickly: with some help from the sense, I found that I could read the specimen given straight away. And as auxiliary languages are only intended for the educated, the fact that to a Croatian, Swedish or even English peasant Novial would be hardly more intelligible than Catalan is no objection. It looks like a real language: the pronunciation and grammar are self-explanatory. We

shall have to have an international language some day, and Novial, if not it, is a valuable contribution towards it.

*The Bonney Family*, by Ruth Suchow. (Jonathan Cape. 7s. 6d.) It is difficult to communicate the charm of *The Bonney Family* to any one who has not already felt the charm of Ruth Suchow's writing. Her themes are the same in this as in her other books: the lives of Middle-West farmers and shopkeepers; the slow change from the old German ways to the new American; the transformation of wild, enchanting children into standardized grown-ups. The beauty lies in the rich, warm texture of the book; in its constant appeal to the eye. She creates a tiny, perfect world in a convex mirror. It is the fashion to compare Ruth Suchow with the Dutch realists, but her peculiar glow seems to have more kinship with France and the later Impressionists. When she describes a table laid for a meal, it has the lustre of a Bonnard: in a summer picnic scene, flesh and grass are shot through with light and heat. *The Bonney Family* is not, however, a series of pictures and episodes. It is a well-told story, and the author has a scale of values. The author is more of an artist than most competent novelists are.

*The Desert Road to Turkestan*. By Owen Lattimore, F.R.G.S. 48 illustrations and two maps. (Methuen. 21s.) Taken as a whole, this book is, I think, a model of what a travel-book should be. It appeals in about equal measure to the geographer, the student of human nature and customs, and the lover of adventure, and the narrative is throughout engrossing, vivid and vigorous. The objective side is thorough and well-balanced; the personal side a strong but unobtrusive thread binding the whole together: it is,

in short, the kind of book that forms a worthy substitute for actual travel.

In 1925 Mr. Lattimore, then employed by a firm in Tientsin, was chosen for an expedition up-country to Pao-tu, on account of his intimate knowledge of the Chinese language. The experience so inflamed his imagination that on his return he tendered his resignation to his employers, and after considerable difficulties started on the journey described in this book. He travelled from Kuei-Hua to Ku Ch'eng-tze, by the route known as the Jao-lu, or Winding Road, which lies between the Great Mongolian Road and the classic Imperial Highway, and crosses the great Gobi Desert. The general line of the Jao-lu is very ancient, but for a long time it was but little used because of its great difficulty and many waterless stages. For this very reason it has now become popular with caravan-masters, who have to elude the depredations both of Mongol marauders and of Chinese collectors of transit-tax. Mr. Lattimore travelled with a caravan, and shared the hardships, the diet, the conversation, the jokes, and even the quarrels of the men, and he gives a great deal of very interesting detail about the ways and means, the organization, customs, and superstitions of caravan life in those regions: he noticed, for instance, traces of fire-worship among the Mongols. Offerings of the first food and tea prepared after camping are thrown onto the fire which has been lit in the middle of the tent: the fire utensils are kept strictly for that purpose only, and to knock out the ashes of one's pipe against the grate is sacrilege.

The photographs are good; the maps a little bald, but very conveniently placed as end-papers.



*Arabia of the Wahhabis.* By H. St. J. B. Philby. (Constable. 3rs. 6d.) This, Mr. Philby's account of the last four months of his mission to Ibn Saud in 1918, forms a third volume to his *Heart of Arabia*, and completes the story of his sojourn in that country. It is a solid book, 400 close pages of valuable topographical and other detail, and will probably appeal more to those who have special connexion with Arabia than to the general reader, who will nevertheless find a great deal in it to interest him. For one thing, it is the last account that will be written of the old primitive Arabia, before the introduction of motors, aeroplanes and high velocity rifles revolutionized for ever the primaeval desert problems. Moreover, at Anaiza and Buraida Mr. Philby trod in Doughty's steps, and met men who remembered him, and who threw interesting sidelights on his exploit. But perhaps the best part of the book is the true picture given of Ibn Saud, who is revealed as curiously ignorant and childish outside the narrow sphere that he administers with such undoubted competence and shrewdness.

The illustrations, photographs of Arab towns and scenery, are very good, and there is an excellent map.

*Bonnet and Shawl: an Album.* By Philip Guedalla. (Hodder & Stoughton. 12s. 6d.) Led by the publisher and padded by the author, these biographical studies of the wives of great Victorians are at once redundant and skimpy, for Mr. Guedalla says too much and tells too little. It is unquestionable that Lady Tennyson was a good wife and Mrs. Carlyle 'not all Egeria', that Mrs. Arnold made a home of Rugby School and Lady Palmerston a palace of Cambridge House; but these circumstances are made clear in the biographies of their husbands, and needed no

elaborate paraphrase or further emphasis. What we do not know and are not told is the true relation of Carlyle to his wife after marriage, or Palmerston's to his before. The imaginary biographies of Lady Muriel James, Sophia Swinburne, and Julie de Goncourt are more successful; and the parodies they contain not only remind us that Mr. Guedalla has a sensitive ear for style in others, but make us wonder what has happened to his own. Always over-attracted to adjectives, he is now infatuated by conjunctions; the sentence of his that does not start with 'so', 'for', or 'but', has had a narrow escape. On page 76 there is a sequence of sentences starting 'For. . . . So. . . . But. . . . So. . . .'; on page 128 'But. . . . So. . . . For. . . .'; on page 163 'So. . . . But. . . . For. . . . But. . . .'. Sometimes this eccentricity is not even varied, as on page 137, where we find 'For though Emily', followed by 'For even poets', or page 83, where 'For he transplanted her to Laleham' is succeeded, after a sentence, by 'For brides of thirty', and 'But Mary', after two, by 'But Mary' again. Admirers of Mr. Guedalla's power over words, among whom the present writer is not least, will turn despondently from *Bonnet and Shawl* to pray for his emancipation from this strange obsession.

The conflict between East and West, which Miss Stella Benson has described so often with charm and humour, is again the subject of her new collection of stories. (*Worlds Within Worlds*. Macmillan. 8s. 6d.) Although many of them have been printed before in various newspapers in the old and new worlds, they do not suffer, as so many collections of this kind do, from lack of unity. For the subject of them all, or nearly all, is one particular corner of Asia where Miss Benson has been exiled. These short

essays, or stories, are easy and delightful to read, because Miss Benson makes no attempt to draw large and alarming parallels between East and West, or involve herself and her readers in a tangle of international politics. Instead, she describes incidents in her travels, not always very pleasant and sometimes extremely comic, in which she bumped her head against the great wall of Chinese manners. The charm of these narratives seems to lie not so much on the surface as in an undercurrent of regret that, in spite of the interest and fun to be found in extraordinary excursions into the wilds of Manchuria, a traveller, exiled from home, can never be perfectly happy. The surface is so brilliant that the shadow of melancholy is barely perceptible, just as the performance of a comic actor deceives an audience into believing that he is the merriest person on earth and has no life or feelings of his own outside the theatre.

*The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena, translated by Elizabeth A. S. Dawes. (Kegan Paul. 15s.)* The appearance of an 'original source' covering the years 1081 to 1118 marks an epoch in English Byzantine studies; and it is to be hoped that Miss Dawes, and others after her, will be encouraged to follow in this labour of love. To pretend that the present volume will interest any but the specialist is useless. Indeed, no such attempt is made; there are neither dates inserted to identify important events nor notes to explain figures of speech comprehensible only to practised Byzantinists. But for those whose interest in the medieval Greeks has already been aroused by manifestations of their art, or more general works on their life and civilization, this incredibly detailed record of a critical period in their history is of infinite value where-

with to check the assertions of their apologists and detractors. Anna Comnena's father, the Emperor Alexius I, ascended the throne ten years after the extinction of Byzantine military power at the battle of Manzikert, and the first desolation of Anatolia by the Seljuk Turks. He found the Empire on the point of dissolution, and he left it, after twenty-seven years' unceasing activity, in a position of strength and prosperity. The period witnessed the first arrival of those Normans who, a century later, wrecked East European civilization and consigned its lands to the Turk. Half the problems of the Near East to-day owe their first mention to Anna Comnena. And her picture of the first crusaders as rapacious and uncivilized marauders represents the natural view of the unfortunate Christian countries through which they passed.

*Memoirs of the Duc de Lauzun, translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff. (Routledge. 10s. 6d.)* To-day, when publicity value is the alphabet of living, it is fairly certain that none of those familiar figures that have long delighted London with their graces is compiling, without thought of public revelation, as sincere account as a man can write of his daily doings. And history will be the poorer for it. Our posterity will never discover post-War London as we have discovered pre-Revolution Paris. It is a matter for regret that in the year A.D. 2000 the authority for the manners of our age will be Mr. Noel Coward instead of the Duc de Lauzun. The autobiography of a man who fought against the first Corsican patriots, who was at one time Marie Antoinette's favourite, who crossed the Atlantic four times to play a considerable part in the American War of Independence, who has left vivid pictures of English and Polish society at the end of the

eighteenth century, and who was destined to be guillotined in 1794 at the age of forty-seven, must, in any case, be entertaining, more especially when the wit and conciseness of the narrative have been enhanced by so reputed a translator as Mr. Scott Moncrieff. But when, in addition, three-fourths of the recital are wholly devoted to the pursuit and conquest of every kind of woman, of every nationality and every station, the value of the document is increased. The world was ruled by aristocracy, and that which aristocracy did was right. To-day, of course, it is right too; that is the definition of aristocracy. But the approval of the masses towards a record of sensual excitement, noted like the bag of a big game-hunter, is still in doubt. Hence, since every word penned is destined for their entertainment, much of our life that a Lauzun would have revealed will remain hid for ever.

*Miracles of the Virgin Mary, compiled by Johannes Herolt about 1440, translated by C. C. Swinton Bland. (Routledge. 7s. 6d.)* Miss Eileen Power's introduction to this, the second of the Broadway Medieval Library, is as brilliant an essay as could be written on one of the outstanding phases of popular life in the Middle Ages. From the great Lady enthroned at Chartres to the children picking Lady's slipper in the English fields, she illustrates the beauty of the Virgin cult. And the wit, devoid of sarcasm, with which she describes how the Mother of God saved the souls and faces of her devotees—drunken clerics and indiscreet abbesses—from the devils in hell seeking the prey that her Son had justly assigned them, is in keeping with the popular complaint of the time that only the bores went to heaven. It was from this complaint, from

the irrefutable logic of damnation, that the cult arose, to provide some means of intercession with the Judge of the World for those in whom their sins had never extinguished the spark of faith. The process was part of that popularization of religion which grew up with the friars. And the miracles, deriving from every age and country and concerning every class of person, were destined to serve as a kind of second gospel, to fire the popular imagination with details infinitely more vivid than the remote incidents of the Holy Land. To read through the ninety-nine here contained is something of an anti-climax after Miss Power's exposition of their significance. It is to be regretted that the proportions of the book were not reversed.

*The Case of Sergeant Grischa, by Arnold Zweig (Secker. 7s. 6d.),* is not only in itself an unusually good novel; it is also that extremely rare thing, a good war-novel; in fact, the one good war-novel which has ever come the reporter's way. Of course, the book has its obvious defects: the manner is ponderous sometimes, sometimes facetious; and it is typical, for example, of the intermittent heaviness of Herr Zweig's narrative style that, upon the first page, when he wishes to introduce us to his characters and scene, he should begin by bidding us contemplate the earth spinning in space, thence bringing us down by gradual stages towards the actual quarter of Europe on which he intends to concentrate his gaze. This happens to be the Eastern Front, a huge sector of forest, marsh-land, and featureless plain, captured by the German army during its advance into Russia. The theme of the novel is the adventures of a Russian prisoner escaping from a prison-camp, recaptured, and eventually

shot (in spite of his proven innocence) for a merely technical offence. Round Grischa's solitary, helpless figure centres a much larger struggle: the conflict of the old and new Prussias, the conflict between militarist and intellectual, and, finally, the conflict between soldier and officer, master and man. All this is admirably suggested; and the book contains as well many incidental passages of great vividness and beauty—the limitless forest, silent clearings piled with the litter of modern war, deserted gun-emplacements where the lynxes breed, telephone-wires strung from tree to tree snapping at a three-days' fall of snow, and the dreary little wood-built Russian-Jewish town of Mervinsk. Altogether a memorable book and excellently translated by Mr. Eric Sutton.

For amateurs of character, besides students of Dostoevsky, *The Diary of Dostoevsky's Wife, translated by Madge Pemberton* (Gollancz. 21s.), cannot be too highly recommended. Anna Grigoryevna Snitkin was a young girl when the great novelist married her, and had previously been employed as his secretary. Her journal, begun shortly after their marriage in April 1867, and continuing till August of the same year, is a simple, almost childlike, production but a unique record of how quickly and thoroughly even the most commonplace young woman can adapt herself to the man with whom she is in love. Treacherous to the point of opening and re-sealing his letters, Madame Dostoevsky was also devotedly loyal; she was pettish and passionate over small things, but would accept the news of Fyodor's really serious gambling losses (since they did not touch her own vanity) with the utmost self-control and sang-froid. The section of her journal which describes their stay at Baden-Baden shows

Dostoievsky possessed by the gambling fever; he loses, then wins, then hurries out again to lose his winnings.

*A Survey of English Literature: 1730-1780, by Oliver Elton (Edward Arnold. 32s.).* With this admirable book Mr. Elton completes his survey of English literature from 1730 to 1880. It is not so much a history of literature as a *Biographia Litteraria* of the English people during the years when having, as it seemed, settled down to be reasonable they became dissatisfied with common sense and began to want, in a favourite phrase of the age, something 'wild', something which should answer the occasional cravings of the spirit, the intermittent awakenings of the eye and ear. In the direction of lucidity, proportion, regularity and urbanity the Augustans had led them as far as race, always inclined to the eccentric and unacademic, was prepared to go. The eighteenth-century public had an open heart for character, for the sights and sounds of the country, and, in spite of Boileau and the unities, a stubborn belief in its own Shakespeare. In the long run it was certain that literary canons and practice would be broadened to admit both the old poetry and the new sense for Nature: hardly less certain that the expansion would destroy much that was worth keeping, and which we in our day are learning regretfully to appreciate.

This process is the theme of Mr. Elton's two volumes. His learning does not require to be commended; but the last few weeks have produced an amusing, if unintended, tribute to the range of his knowledge. A foreign scholar recently filled a column and more of the *Times Literary Supplement* with a demonstration that Collins had read Martin's account of St. Kilda and the Western Islands. When this book comes into his hands it will teach him,



I trust, 'not to expect applause for a little thing like that'. It is all here. I have only noticed one omission. Lavington's *Enthusiasm* was operating effectually well into the nineteenth century. I am surprised Mr. Elton did not think it worth an epigram at least.

But the true test of a literary history is not whether the student must keep it handy, but whether the ordinary man, not contemplating a doctoral thesis, will want to read the people in it. Mr. Elton works with a crowded stage, yet his minor figures never degenerate into a stage crowd. The great men appear not in lonely eminence as classics, but as the heads of a busy literary society. To keep such a society under control, to avoid the catalogue manner on the one hand and philosophizing about

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tendencies on the other, to give character to the Fourth Citizen and vitality to Charles, His Friend, is what taxes the skill of the literary historian. Much of my enjoyment of the book came from the dexterity with which Mr. Elton varies his mode of approach and makes his lesser characters, Shenstone, Cunningham, Byrom, Charles Wesley, and a hundred others, appear at the right time and say the right thing. About an eighth of the book is quotation; yet the quotations are not showpieces, and this is as it should be. We do not go to a history of literature to see how well the great men could write at their best, but how the ordinary, and therefore the representative, men were writing at any particular time. The greater part of literature, past or present, is terribly dull; Mr. Elton, however, can enter the Cave of Morpheus and bring back a discriminating account of the occupations of its inhabitants. He is always on the alert to catch the sentence which discloses the man or the movement of the age, and to slip it into his pattern with a neat characterizing touch.

An excellent example of his method comes at the very end of the book. 'Orme, in style and power of painting, inferior to no English historian'—how many readers have been incited by that encomium to take down the *Military Transactions*, and how many have put it back again, regretting the iron appetite of our fathers! Mr. Elton selects one short passage from Orme's account of the Black Hole. 'Faintness sometimes gave short pauses of quiet, *but the first motion of any one renewed the struggle through all* under which ever and anon someone sunk to rise no more.' A stroke which, Mr. Elton remarks, recalls the condensed thinking of Thucydides. Criticism like this, so true and occurring so unexpectedly, does more than refine the reader's perception. It evokes a personality.

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And such criticism is the atmosphere of Mr. Elton's survey.

### SLEUTHS AND CLUES

Many writers have talked about detectives who used only psychological methods. Mr. Joseph Gollomb, in *The Portrait Invisible* (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.), has really drawn one. His 'Goldfish' finds no clues but psychological clues; and he finds them rather well, particularly when he is reading its owner's character from an abandoned house, and when he is drawing conclusions from the behaviour of the rather over-sentimentalized hero. The misfortune is that, though he discovers the suspect innocent, he does not discover the criminal; at least, if he does, we are never told how. And that, one would imagine, must be a drawback to a detective. As a character, apart from his profession, he is a theatrical impossibility, and none of the other characters is particularly plausible. The book is, however, worth reading, both because it really tries to keep to a single method of detection, and because the story, though laid in New York, is less aggressively American than some of its kind.

Mr. Charles Barry, on the other hand, in *The Clue of the Clot* (Hutchinson. 7s. 6d.) tries to transplant American technique to an English scene, with unhappy results. All these shootings and dope dens and gangs are plausible, maybe, in Chi., but not in London. There is a great deal of rushing to and fro, half a dozen indistinguishable detectives, one good character—a girl from New York—and the clue of the clot, which, as a central incident, is a failure. The book is not too bad; but one reviewer, at any rate, strongly dislikes White Slave Traffic as a *motif*. *The Three Crows*, by John Hunter (Cassell. 7s. 6d.), is the same,

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only more so. It recalls in details that incredible book, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and only those who like gobbets of improbable melodrama should try it.

*Without Judge or Jury*, by Ralph Rodd (*Collins. 7s. 6d.*), has in some ways the best plot of all this bunch. It opens in a sufficiently dramatic manner; and, though the solution of the mystery is fairly apparent some way before the end of the book, the reader's interest is adequately kept up by wondering how the amateur detective is going to solve the crime without damaging the criminal. Mr. Rodd has some quite good character-sketches, the night-club girl, for example, and the keeper of the curiosity shop, and best, the ex-detective sacked from Scotland Yard for bribery, and endeavouring to get back by unearthing a scandal about one of the country's soldier heroes. And his style is quite good. 'Quite good', however, is the term one would apply to his book all round. The plot, the characters, and the style are all quite good, and none very good. The book, in sum, is by no means first class, but well worth reading. *The Phantom Passenger*, by Mansfield Scott (*Lane. 7s. 6d.*), is an average thriller, neither good nor bad.

The interest of this batch is that only one of them—Mr. Barry's—is by a practised hand. The authors are newcomers, or two-or-three-book men; and they show us pretty well what may be expected from the lower ranks of the craft. In general, the verdict is 'pretty fair; quite readable, but weak on plot'. Mr. Baines's book is by far the best written: Mr. Rodd's has the best plot. The young writer, looking for models, and realizing that Mr. Freeman (say) is not to be imitated easily, might well model his style on Mr. Baines, his construction on Mr. Rodd, and try to borrow a joke or two from Mr. Benstead.

# LIFE AND LETTERS

EDITED BY DESMOND MACCARTHY

ASSISTANT EDITOR: OLIVER BRETT

VOL. II. NO. 11. APRIL 1929

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# LIFE AND LETTERS

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## JEREMY TAYLOR

Our Romantic critics, Coleridge and Lamb and Hazlitt, rendered an important service to English letters by their re-discovery of many old English writers who had fallen out of fashion. They saw, however, these favourites of theirs, these old divines and dramatists, looming somewhat larger than life in the misty past, and often praised them with more zeal than cool discrimination. There is no one, perhaps, whose fame has been more affected by this splendid injustice than that worthy prelate and old controversial writer, Jeremy Taylor. Coleridge, to whom he was an object of almost unbounded admiration, extolled his 'great and lovely mind'; and, comparing him more than once with Shakespeare, placed him with Shakespeare and Milton and Bacon among the four great geniuses of our older literature.

Coleridge inspired Charles Lamb, as Lamb tells us in one of his letters, with this 'Love of Jeremy Taylor', which led him to declare that Taylor 'has more and more beautiful imagery and more knowledge and description of human life and manners than any prose book in the language: he has more delicacy and sweetness than any mortal, the "gentle" Shakespeare hardly excepted.' Hazlitt equalled Coleridge and Lamb in his enthusiasm;

when the name of Jeremy Taylor is no longer revered, he declared, 'genius will have become a mockery, and virtue an empty shade.' These are, indeed, high praises, and they come to us from sources which we cannot but respect. Any one, however, who, inspired by them, might undertake to read the massive volumes of this 'Shakespeare of English divines', as he has been often called, is likely to meet with no small disappointment. He wrote for his own age, but the concerns of that age are no longer ours; the controversies in which he engaged have been almost forgotten; the doctrines he expounded, the ideals of piety and religion he upheld, have changed their aspect, or have been stated in other terms; his exhortations and denunciations fall but faintly upon our ears. A few fine passages in prose anthologies, a few fine sentences in his praise from Coleridge and Lamb and Hazlitt, preserve his fame; but it is a fame at second hand, a borrowed glory, and one that seems to be waning with the years.

Our most intimate glimpses of Jeremy Taylor as a man are derived from his funeral sermon preached by his friend and faithful companion, George Rust. He was a wonder in his youth, Rust rhetorically tells us, 'and had he lived amongst the ancient pagans he had been ushered into the world with a miracle, and swans must have danced and sung at his birth'. When at the age of twenty-one or twenty-two, he appeared in the pulpit of St. Paul's, he preached, we are told, 'to the admiration and astonishment of his auditory; and by his florid and youthful beauty, and sweet and pleasant air, and sublime and raised discourses, he made his hearers take him for some young angel, newly descended from the visions of glory'.

Jeremy Taylor seems to have preserved all his life this comeliness of personal appearance, and was apparently not unaware of his good looks himself. As Bishop Heber remarks, 'few authors have so frequently introduced their own portraits, in different characters and attitudes as ornaments to their printed works. So far as we may judge from these, he appears to have been above the middle size, strongly and handsomely proportioned, with his hair long and gracefully curling on his cheeks, dark eyes, full of sweetness, and an open and intelligent countenance.'

This divine of 'golden voice and angelic aspect' was the author of a large body of theological writings, many sermons and many volumes of religious edification and controversy.

What, then, is to be our attitude to these 'volumes of religion and mountains of piety', these immense unread, unreadable books, which Jeremy Taylor left behind him? There is much in the literature of old theology which is of permanent interest, even to the most secular-minded of modern readers. In the works of certain theologians, we find ourselves in contact with original minds of great constructive power; while there are others who appeal to us either by their profound knowledge of the human heart, or by the mystical illumination and fervour of their spirits. Jeremy Taylor cannot rank, however, with the great thinkers and original minds of the Church, nor with its profound psychologists or its saints and mystics. His most fervent admirers have to admit that his mental powers were somewhat limited and commonplace, and that he failed in handling the larger questions of religious thought. Even Coleridge, with all his veneration for Jeremy Taylor, confessed that what he expressed was

little more than the theological commonplace of the time; that he 'had no ideas', that in contrast with his handling of other people's opinions his own thought is 'all weather-eaten, dim, useless, a *ghost* in marble'.

His popularity among his own contemporaries we can understand; the controversies in which he was a protagonist were to them of passionate interest, and the novelty of his devotional works made a strong appeal to the piety of that pious generation. But the revival of his reputation, his second crowning, the fact that his fame was so splendidly renewed, that his ghost was called up from the shades and enthroned, by the King-makers of our literature, almost by the side of Shakespeare, and his name endowed with a posthumous glory that has once more grown dim—this is the extraordinary fate which demands an explanation, this the almost unprecedented fortune of an ancient divine, who, to borrow one of his own phrases, 'once wore a mitre and is now a heap of dust'.

I quote these words—which fired Hazlitt's imagination—because the best way after all of approaching the problem of Jeremy Taylor's reputation is simply to copy out one of his own phrases. For the truth is that this devotional writer, though not endowed with the other qualities of genius, did possess one gift—the gift of style—which is perhaps the most essential gift of a great writer, and which was possessed by him so happily and to so supreme a degree, that it is of itself enough to explain and almost to justify the splendid praises which have been so liberally heaped upon him.

A distinction is often drawn between style and matter, between a writer's thought and his expression of that thought; and this distinction, although in the last analysis it may prove to be a superficial one, will yet be of use

to us in our consideration of a writer who is read, as far as he is read at all, for his style—his subject-matter, or what he himself thought to be his subject-matter, what he deliberately attempted to inculcate and preach, being the well-known commonplaces of morals and religion, or controversial matters of no interest to us now.

In writing of Jeremy Taylor's style, we must, however, distinguish between his usual and his occasionally inspired way of writing. The great bulk of his work, and all his controversial volumes, are written in a periodic harmonious graceful Ciceronian style which stands midway between the elaborate, but somewhat clumsy, prose of the Elizabethan era, and the more correct and sober medium of the eighteenth century. This easy, harmonious prose is always adequate for its purpose; it tends, however, to be somewhat impersonal, and even dry and colourless at times; and for the most part it cannot be said to surpass in merit the prose of other divines of the Restoration period. But now and then as we read him, an imagination, radiant and strange, seems to unfold its wings and soar aloft; now and then this painful clergyman, as he writes down his arguments and expositions, seems to dip his pen in enchanted ink; the words begin to dance and glitter, and a splendour falls upon the illuminated page. And when this happens the effect is so surprising that it seems the result of a spell, an incantation, a kind of magic.

Matthew Arnold has written of that magic of style, which is, he says, creative, and which, being creative, possesses an extraordinary value. The phrase 'magic of style' is, like the word 'creative', somewhat vague in its meaning, but since Jeremy Taylor possessed this magic and this creative power of phrasing; since it is, in fact, his special quality, the thing that marks him out and makes

him significant, any definition of his gift must involve an attempt to explain, or at least to describe, this strange evocative power of singing words and phrases.

That great master of prose-style, Flaubert, declared that the criticism of literature fell behind that of science and history because it rested on no firm foundation—what literary critics lacked, he said, was a knowledge of the anatomy of style, of the nature and composition of the phrase. And when the critic is met by phrases like many of Jeremy Taylor's, with their haunting verbal music, he finds himself led captive by a charm and spell which he cannot analyse, an incalculable, incommunicable art neither to be imitated nor explained.

Yet there are certain ingredients in this magic, certain ways of producing these effects of beauty, which it is possible to observe and isolate and define. Two main elements in style may be distinguished, the sound and the image, the verbal music which enchants the ear, and the image which fascinates the eye. There is a certain sensuous charm, a texture of pleasurable sensation, to be derived from the material qualities of the medium of any art, and Jeremy Taylor was a master of that verbal music, that felicity of sound and rhythm, which is the basis, the fundamental quality of this audible art of language. 'No sigh for the folly of an irrevocable word'—in the harmonious variety of the vowel sounds of such a phrase we are charmed by this music; and above all, in what Donne calls the 'melodious fall of words', in the beautiful close of some great sentence, we are conscious of his mastery of sound and rhythm; as when, for instance, in describing the passage of an eagle through the air, he says 'as long as her flight lasted the air was shaken, but there remains no path behind her'.

This wonder-working effect of sound and rhythm can perhaps be best noted when Jeremy Taylor expresses the same idea in a less, and then a more perfect form. Thus, in one of his earlier works, he writes: 'Lucifer and many angels, walking upon the battlements of heaven, grew top-heavy and fell to the state of Devils'; but in the *Holy Dying* he says of these fallen angels: 'They grew vertiginous and fell from the battlements of heaven'. In the contrast of these phrases: 'They grew top-heavy and fell to the state of Devils'—'They grew virtiginous and fell from the battlements of heaven', we can perceive the little changes of sound and rhythm which make so much difference—and how much it is!

With just a slight change of cadence, a new arrangement of epithets, the miracle happens, the crystallization takes place, and the phrase becomes a phrase of enchantment.

In addition to this music of phrase, we often note in Jeremy Taylor's fine passages a singular and happy audacity of diction. He writes of the fading rose falling at last into the 'portion of weeds and *outworn* faces', of the criminal passing to execution through the *execrable* gates of cities, or the falling tide deserting the '*unfaithful* dwelling of the sand'.

The faults of great authors, Coleridge has remarked, are generally their excellences carried to an excess; and the fullness, overflow, superfluity, which Coleridge notes in Jeremy Taylor's prose, the over-abundant piling up of clauses, words and epithets, provides, nevertheless, in his happier passages that richness of organ music, which gives a certain splendour to our older prose, and makes our modern way of writing sometimes seem short-breathed and jejune in comparison.

We long for perishing meat, and fill our stomachs with corruption, we look after white and red, and the weaker beauties of the night, we are passionate after rings and seals, and enraged at the breaking of a crystall, . . . our hearts are hard, and inflexible to the softer whispers of mercy and compassion, having no loves for anything but strange flesh, and heaps of money, and popular noises, for misery and folly; and therefore we are a huge way off from the Kingdom of God, whose excellences, whose designs, whose ends, whose constitution is spiritual and holy and separate and sublime and perfect.

English writing has no doubt gained much in precision and conciseness since these great periodic sentences have fallen out of fashion; but we have paid for our gain by the loss of that long-breathed eloquence, that great Atlantic roll of English prose with which no modern writers, save perhaps Landor, De Quincey and Ruskin, have attempted to enrich their pages.

But the main quality and magic of Jeremy Taylor's style is the rich and abundant use of his visual gift in the perpetual creation of similes and metaphors—the welling-forth, as from an inexhaustible fountain, of shining and flashing images. The use of simile and metaphor—and metaphors are only less explicit similes—was, Aristotle said, by far the most important element in style, for it was the gift of Nature and could not be imparted by another, and was the mark of what he called the *ἐνφύης*, the 'genius', as we translate the word, although our modern idea of genius is hardly a Greek conception.

Although there have been authors of eminence who have made but a sparing use of metaphors, yet the power of thinking in images, *le don des images*, has always been an important part of the endowment of the greatest writers. Indeed, the greater he is the more richly, like Aeschylus, or Plato, or Shakespeare, he seems to be dowered with this splendid gift. As soon as a rich imagination begins to



glow, it finds itself in need of metaphors and figurative expressions to convey its warmth of meaning; and these images, though sometimes derived from the other senses, are for the most part visual images, since thoughts and moods and feelings seem to find in visible objects both their most appropriate embodiment, and their most potent means of impressing themselves upon the minds and sensibilities of others.

The figures of other preachers, rich and abundant as they often are, partake of the nature of rhetorical figures; to produce their effect, to persuade the will, or satisfy the understanding, they must be familiar to their audience; and the sense of this appeal to an audience always accompanies them. But the images of Jeremy Taylor, although he too was an orator, are a poet's images; they surprise us by their novelty of expression, and his aim seems to be to express his own emotions rather than to excite those of others, to delight the imagination rather than to move the will, to enrich and feed the mind with lyric tenderness and beauty rather than to furnish it with motives for action.

It is this gift of splendid metaphor, of flashing before our eyes pictures which are of the highest poetic beauty, and are clothed in a soft radiance of words, that is Jeremy Taylor's special gift and supreme endowment. It is this, and almost this alone, which makes him a great writer and explains the otherwise almost fantastic comparison of his genius to that of Shakespeare. For, lacking as he lacked most of the other qualities of Shakespeare's greatness, Jeremy Taylor nevertheless, as Coleridge pointed out, almost rivals Shakespeare in that supremest gift of the poet, the power of embodying his thought in images of beauty and splendour.

Jeremy Taylor may therefore be described as a writer with one gift, and only one, of the highest quality; for this singularity his writings deserve a place among the rarities and more precious curiosities of our literature. But there is another, and still more curious, reason for allotting him his place; for although endowed with the poet's gifts of imagery and music, it was in prose, and not in poetry, that he found his appropriate medium of expression; and when he turned to verse, his light was eclipsed and his power faded. We possess a number of poems of his composition; he tried to express many of his ideas, both in verse and prose, and it is curious to compare his treatment of the same themes in the different mediums. In his sermon on the Day of Judgement, for instance, he describes the 'thunders of the dying and groaning Heavens and the crack of the dissolving world, when the whole fabric of nature shall shake into dissolution and eternal ashes'.

When earth shall vanish from thy sight,  
The heavens that never err'd,  
But observ'd  
Thy laws, shal from thy presence take their flight,

is the poor rendering he gives in verse of the same subject.

Let us take as one example of Jeremy Taylor's famous poetic similes, the simile of the lark.

For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grasse and soaring upwards singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern winde, and his motion made irregular and unconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest, then it could recover by the libration and frequent weighing of his wings; till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay'd till the storm was over, and then it made a prosperous flight, and did

rise and sing as if it had learned musick and motion from an Angell as he passed sometimes through the air about his ministries here below.<sup>1</sup>

What is English grammar to say about writing which so outrageously flouts its rules, and English criticism, with its neat distinctions between poetry and prose, and the respective domains of each—how is our criticism to deal with prose-lyrics like these, which are as musical and poetical as almost any verse?

It may say, and justly say, that for any one who did not possess Jeremy Taylor's gifts of imagination, it would be a most fatal thing to try to imitate his imaginative prose; and it may note, as Matthew Arnold noted, passages—too many passages—in which, owing to a failure of sobriety and good taste, this prose becomes overadorned

<sup>1</sup> It might perhaps be supposed that giant similes like those of Jeremy Taylor's would be completely out of place in modern prose. One modern writer, however, has been able to handle them with admirable effect. When Henry James wishes, for instance, to describe the renunciation, on the part of a wronged lady, of all vindictive feelings, he says that these passions of fury and revenge seemed to her, as she thought of them, like 'a wild eastern caravan, looming into view with crude colours in the sun, fierce pipes in the air, high spears against the sky, all a-thrill, a natural joy to mingle with, but turning off short before it reached her and plunging into other defiles'. *The Golden Bowl*, p. 455

Compare also in the same novel the earlier pagoda simile: 'This situation had been occupying for months and months the very centre of the garden of her life, but it had reared itself there like some strange tall tower of ivory, or perhaps rather some wonderful beautiful but outlandish pagoda, a structure plated with hard bright porcelain, coloured and figured and adorned at the overhanging eaves with silver bells that tinkled ever so charmingly stirred by chance airs. She had walked round and round it . . .', etc. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

and florid and sometimes almost grotesque. And yet a judicious criticism, eager to welcome excellence in all its varied forms, cannot but pay a tribute of admiration to this high, unprecedented way of writing, this leaping from image to image with the greatest daring, this prose, so rich in colour, beauty and pathos of expression.

Such, then, are the peculiarities of Jeremy Taylor's talent, the curious questions which his writings suggest. Equally curious is the fact that although he must have been conscious of this special gift, he seems to have set no especial value upon it. His main purpose in writing was controversial and hortatory; his great work of moral casuistry was the work he believed would bring him lasting fame; of his splendid gifts of style and imagery, he only made an occasional and as it were a casual use; and there is not much evidence of them in the works of his earlier or his later period. It was really only during the few happy sequestered years which he spent in South Wales, amid the mountains and valleys and woodlands of that remote and romantic region, when, after the ruin, as he regarded it, of Church and State, and the shipwreck of his own private fortune, he so miraculously found refuge at the Golden Grove, and peace and leisure, that he unfolded his golden talent from its napkin—that, as Sir Edmund Gosse puts it, 'his genius spread its branches and flowered like a magnolia under the shadow of a southern wall in a quiet courtyard'.

The Earl of Carbery and his young and saintly wife were his patrons and protectors, and in the Countess he found a gentle friend and pious disciple; it was apparently for her that he filled his sermons at Golden Grove with radiant splendour, and illuminated with gold-leaf the

missals of devotion which he dedicated to her use; almost all his finest pages and passages were preached before her or written for her perusal; and the most beautiful of all his books, the *Holy Dying*, was composed for her edification; and when she died in holiness before its printing, he produced, to use his own phrase, the sheets of that publication as a covering for her hearse—as a purple pall, we may describe it, for this sainted lady, of sombre and splendid prose.

This holy friendship and spiritual devotion was thus the inspiration of Jeremy Taylor's genius; and it was in the sunshine of Lady Carbery's admiration that—if we may allow ourselves so profane an image—her chaplain spread before her the fan of his splendid talent, rich with colours dipped in heaven and many-tinted eyes. When this sunshine is darkened at her death, the display is over, and the glittering round is folded up; the radiance fades from Jeremy Taylor's pages and their fine gold is dimmed.

The light of the sun he basked in for a few years of his overclouded life, fills the sermons of those years with a bright illumination, and indeed it is from the sun itself that he borrows his fairest-shining similes and illustrations.

Sir Edmund Gosse has finely noted the sensitiveness of Jeremy Taylor to the phenomena of light, and adds that he writes with equal happiness about water in almost all its forms. 'The sun reflecting upon a limpid fountain'; this phrase of Jeremy Taylor's gives us a picture in miniature of the luminous world in which his imagination delighted—a world gleaming with the ripple and the shine of water. In his observation of aqueous phenomena he employs a minute, almost microscopic observation, as when he writes, for instance, of a drop of water falling into dust.

When a little water is spilt from a full vessel and falls into the enemy dust, it curls itself into a drop and so stands equally armed in every point of the circle dividing the forces of the enemy, that by that little union it may stand as long as it can, but if it be dissolved into flatness it is changed into the nature and possession of the dust.<sup>1</sup>

Although Jeremy Taylor sometimes made use of metaphors and similes from the grander phenomena of nature, from clouds and storms and angry seas, from tempestuous winds roaring in the tree-tops of a forest, his world of images is for the most part composed of things luminous and minute and transitory and flickering; of glow-worms, shooting-stars and the flames of tapers, of bees and dancing gnats, of the trembling needle, of birds' nests and the 'little rings of the vine when they begin to curl', of the morning mushroom, of the rose that fades, of 'the down of thistles, and the softest gossamer'.

We do not always remember how largely our modern love of nature is of theological origin, how much our delight in the Creation is due to our belief, or the belief of our ancestors, in the beneficent design and loving purpose of its great Creator. Although sterner theologians like the Jansenists and the Calvinists regarded the world as under a curse and as an abyss of corruption, the gentler spirits of the Christian faith saw in the beauties of the natural world reflections and emanations of the divine beauty—these pious clergymen walking out (and surely the thought of them is a holy one) 'to suck divinity', as one of them has phrased it, 'from the flowers of nature'. God, Jeremy Taylor said, was the 'God of beauties and perfections'; 'the beauteous frame of heaven and earth was the glass in which he beheld His wisdom'. 'He is glorified in the Sunne and Moon, in the rare fabrick of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Worthy Communicant*, p. 275.

honeycombs, in the discipline of Bees, in the oeconomy of Pismires, in the little houses of birds, in the curiosity of an eye, God being pleased to delight in those little images and reflexes of Himself from those pretty mirrors.'

The similes of Jeremy Taylor's great contemporary, Milton, are drawn for the most part from books, from history, from mythology, from travellers' tales or the writings of astronomers; they open vast and shadowy perspectives and are full of remote resonances and echoes. Jeremy Taylor makes use sometimes of these bookish and remote images; the Libyan lion, for instance, 'struck with a Mauritanian spear', the mice of Africa who hide golden ore in their bowels, the howling of 'evening wolves when they miss their draught of blood in their evening revels', or the Lapland witches, who 'dance the round, but there is a horror and a harshness in the music'. For the most part, however, his images are drawn from Nature as he observed its minute perfections with careful, and, it would seem, myopic eyes. Indeed, as Sir Edmund Gosse has said, 'with the solitary exception of Shakespeare, there is no writer in all our early literature who has made so fresh and copious and effective use of metaphor taken directly from the observation of natural objects.'<sup>1</sup>

Jeremy Taylor not only observed the things he saw about him, and often, as Mr. Bridges has said of Keats, drew his images from common things, which are for the first time represented as beautiful, but he also possessed another quality, a warmth or tenderness, which Mr. Bridges noted as being of inestimable value in Keats's poems. The tiny stream, 'that begs leave of every twig to let it pass', the breeze not willing to disturb the softest stalk of a violet, the flies that rise from 'their little graves

<sup>1</sup> Gosse, p. 222.

in walls' and dance awhile in the winter beams,<sup>1</sup> the dashes of 'affectionate rain'; or 'the throbs and little beatings' of the lover's watch—these are a few instances of that warmth of imagery which verges on the sentimental and yet so exquisitely escapes it.

This power of delicate observation, of the poetic use of concrete detail, seemed to lose, for the following generation, all its interest: the eighteenth century was quite content with the hackneyed and generalized imagery of poetic convention; the variegated world, with its richness of light and colour, faded away from the eyes of men. Wordsworth states that with very few exceptions he could find, in the poetry of the period between the publication of *Paradise Lost* and Thomson's *Seasons*, no new images drawn from the observation of external nature, or written with the poet's eye steadily fixed upon its object. But with the 'return to Nature' of the Romantic Movement, with the recovered vision of external beauty, it was natural that the fame of Jeremy Taylor who, in his use of shining imagery, may be regarded as the last of the Elizabethans, should acquire a new lustre. His gift of imagination, his perpetual evocation of pictorial images, is all the more striking because this essentially poetic gift shines out, not in poetry, but in didactic and controversial prose; we can observe it there, as it were, in isolation; and we can observe it there also in its excess. For it may be said of Jeremy Taylor, as it was said of Chateaubriand, that his imagination, and his image-making power, is too potent; his metaphors and similes are too luminous for their moral purpose, they outshine and overadorn and almost obliterate the moral thought they are meant to illustrate. We can, indeed, hardly share

<sup>1</sup> *XXVIII Sermons*, p. 176.



with much confidence the hope of Jeremy Taylor's episcopal and pious editor that those who read his writings for their beauties will seriously appropriate to themselves the moral lessons they convey.

The possession of a style full of magic is disadvantageous in another way to the earnest preacher and writer of moral prose. It is a dangerous thing for him to denounce evil in lovely chimes of words; for the boundaries of invective and panegyric approach each other more closely than they ought to in a completely moral world, and thunders of denunciation may be sometimes accompanied by brilliant flashes that dazzle and delight our eyes. A sin which is damned with too much eloquence may arouse more interest than holy execration; and when we read in Jeremy Taylor of 'the falling stars and little glow-worms of the world', we, too, are tempted to turn from the altar and gaze on them with worldly eyes; 'the harlots' hands that build the fairy castle' are hardly regarded by us with all the reprobation they deserve, and a sinner who, with a heart full of wine and rage and folly goes 'singing to the grave' may seem to have made what is after all a not inglorious end.

In Jeremy Taylor's best writing, when the poet emerged in the preacher, what he really says, rather than what he thinks he is saying—his unconscious rather than his conscious utterance—is the thing which is of real interest and importance to us. The preacher may be preaching with the most solemn emphasis of the four great last things, of Death and Judgement and Hell and Heaven, but if the poet within his cassock is singing at the same time of the dew on the leaves of the rose, it is to the song rather than the sermon that we listen.

Imaginative prose, full of colour and music, is at present

out of fashion; in the view of our contemporary critics (at least in England), prose should be lucid, logical, not difficult to write, and almost devoid of colour. Precision and uniformity of texture are its merits, and it should never dare to rise to special heights of imaginative vision. Such is the accepted—and, to most authors—the acceptable and labour-saving theory; and since the fame of the immortals is never really fixed, but must still follow the ebbs and flows of sublunary fashions, our old writers of finely-wrought and imaginative prose have fallen out of favour. But when we read prose like the prose of the Prayer Book and the Bible, of Shakespeare and Milton, of Donne and Sir Thomas Browne and Jeremy Taylor, are we, as Hazlitt asks, to cut ourselves off from beauties like these with a theory? Is it not wiser to welcome excellence in all the expressive forms in which it presents itself to our appreciation? May we not admit the existence of great writers who, like Plato, were poets but not versifiers, and say of Jeremy Taylor, as was said of De Quincey—and might be also said of Sir Thomas Browne—that he has revealed new capacities of the language; has enlarged our conceptions concerning the possibilities of what Dryden described as ‘the other harmony of prose’.

EDITH WHARTON

## VISIBILITY IN FICTION

(*Visibility: the condition of being visible.*—New English Dictionary)

## I

No one interested in the art of fiction can have failed to reflect on the mysterious element which seems to possess, above all others, the antiseptic quality of keeping a novel alive. One reader may wish to prove this quality to be one thing, another reader another. 'Style', that undefinable yet so plentifully defined attribute, is perhaps most often invoked—and 'style' (in the sense of the selective quality which shapes substance as well as form) can in fact embalm a tale: that is, give it an enduring semblance of vitality. Style can arrest the air of lifelikeness; but it cannot really keep the characters alive, and the aliveness of the characters seems the novel's one assurance of prolonged survival.

In the attempt to probe this mystery of visibility one ends by having to put aside all theories, all the reasons one's personal preferences might dispose one to invoke as decisive. It may or may not be possible to find out why the power of giving life is the novelist's only assurance against dissolution; the facts declare it to be so. One need only enumerate the small number of novels which, outliving both their first success and their inevitable subsequent depreciation, have again floated to the surface, and held their place there, to see that however different they are in kind, however difficult it seems to discover their common denominator, they have one, and it is this.

Or rather, to be still more accurate, they have two, seldom co-existent, but on the contrary mutually exclusive. These privileged books, in fact, are sometimes just 'good yarns', in the old simple sense of the tale of adventure, the tale in which the characters remain subordinate to their experiences, exist only in function of what happens to them, though these happenings may be so vividly depicted as to reflect the light of life upon their faces. It was necessary to open a parenthesis for the inclusion of the stories which have achieved this kind of immortality, or the reader would have cried 'And Rob Roy? And Moby Dick? And Lord Jim?'; but they can hardly be included in the present inquiry, which concerns rather the fictitious people who remain vivid to us through some animating principle distinct from the adventures that befall them—characters so present in the minds of generations of readers that they have acquired an historic personality, and go on living with the substantiality of the famous people of the past.

A good story has enthralled readers from the beginning of time, and will doubtless always do so. The recent craze for the detective novel is the inevitable reaction from the modern novelist's growing tendency to situate the experiences of his characters more and more in the region of thought and emotion; but the people in most novels of adventure live with a mere vegetable life compared with the vital flame which animates the figures depicted in great novels of character or of manners. No one, for instance, would be likely to claim for the actors in the best of such tales—Robinson Crusoe, the vividest of the Dumas series, even the most successful among Scott's—the acute visibility which makes the heart throb and the marrow tingle at the flesh-and-blood aliveness of Tolstoy's Prince Andrew and Natasha, of Beatrix Esmond and the

Fotheringay, of the Père Goriot, old Grandet, Madame Marneffe, or the incomparable Madame de Rênal of *Le Rouge et le Noir*.

Three cases indeed there are wherein adventure and character-drawing so closely overlap that it would be rash to maintain that the tales owe their survival to the one element rather than the other. These exceptions are, of course, to be found in the novels of Scott, Stevenson and Conrad, the only novelists of adventure who have quite successfully defended the individuality of some at least of their characters against the overwhelming encroachment of events. Some; not all; but more at least than Dumas, whose Chicot indeed pleads to be excepted, but whose other characters linger in memory only as cleverly-drawn but one-dimensional figures compared with the living beings of the great novelists of character. It is certain at any rate that the novel of manners or of character (and all the greatest novels belong in one or the other of these groups) must stand or fall with the degree of lifelikeness of the characters. To the axiom thus narrowed down few exceptions will be found save the somewhat awkward one of the phantasmagoric world of Dickens. This world indeed is tremendously alive; it has entered into all our lives; yet on surveying it attentively one perceives that the aliveness is not always life-like, and that it is always larger than life. These overwhelmingly exuberant people, who, whenever they appear, go through the same tricks of speech or gesture, as though bouncing out of the wings at the call of their cue, are in fact the people of the stage, that other-dimensional land where attention must be focussed and character defined by devices of representation as different from the novelist's as sculpture is from painting.

The startling visibility of Dickens's characters is indisputable; they are 'close-ups' before the cinema. And there is no doubt, either, that in spite of the elaborate machinery of his plots, Dickens takes rank, and high rank, among the novelists of character, and as such only has survived. Yet his characters live but the oddly restricted lives of people in plays (in all plays but the greatest): that is, they live only in their story, as the people of a drama live only in its dramatic conventions. To accept the reality of these characters one must first accept the artificial conditions in which they exist; and that Dickens can constrain most of his readers to do this is proved by the survival of his novels. Mrs. Nickleby, at first sight, seems as much alive as any character in *War and Peace*; not until the history enshrining her is at an end does one perceive that she lives only in its pages, can breathe only its peculiar air; whereas the Princess Marie, Natasha, the wonderful Rostov family, and all the rest of the characters in *War and Peace*, live as we live, in time and space live a life independent of the narrative in which they figure, a life overflowing the bounds of even the vast scene which their creator conceived for them.

Scott, Stevenson, Conrad, though first of all tellers of good tales rather than psychological novelists, have nevertheless given to some of the characters peopling their pages a deeper reality than Dickens ever gave to his. What they have failed in is to meet the supremest test: they have animated episodical characters, but their central figures (only, perhaps, excepting Conrad's Nostromo) have remained abstractions or puppets. Dugald Dalgetty and Andrew Fairservice are real flesh-and-blood; Rob Roy, Waverley, the Master of Ballantrae, brave figures as they are, yet seem fabricated out of a

surprisingly life-like substance which faintly suggests the most expensive embalming.

## II

But it is after all of greater interest for the critic (and still more, of course, for the novelist) to try to detect what makes for visibility in character-drawing than to speculate on the mysterious reasons why such visibility keeps a book afloat while all the other fairy godmothers who attend its launching—beauties of style and of description, intellectual insight and moral ardour—cannot save it from going to the bottom.

The only novels that live are those whose characters the reader calls by their names. Emma (whether Woodhouse or Bovary), the Père Goriot, Rastignac, Anna Karénine, Wronsky, Barry Lyndon, Clive Newcome, Jos Sedley, Becky Sharp, Lord Steyne, Daisy Miller—what reader ever hesitates over their identity, or would think of citing their names in quotation-marks? They have broken away from the printed page and its symbols, they mix with us freely, naturally; and so do a host of minor figures who have mostly escaped out of the same tales. For the gift of giving visibility to the characters of fiction is the rarest in the novelist's endowment, and one can almost count on ten fingers the creative artists who have possessed it.

To get a general consensus as to who they are would not be difficult, so rare and so compelling is this art of conferring visibility; but the beginning of wisdom would be to find out how it is done. At first that too seems not impossible; one inclines to ascribe the result to the trick of associating, in the reader's mind, the characters depicted with a certain set of idiosyncrasies of word, gesture, conduct, or else to the degree of visual intensity

with which the author has evoked them—or to the combination of both procedures, as in Balzac. But is this explanation adequate? Does the most profoundly real visibility obey the call of such recurrent artifices? Is it not the result of a combination of arts much subtler and less self-conscious than these?

Let us take the people whom the novelist tries to make visible by associating them with catch-words and ascribing to them, whenever they appear, the same physical or mental oddities. Dickens excelled in this art, and to Zola and the French 'naturalists' it became an accepted device of the craft, their chief short-cut to realization. Whoever sneezed or squinted on the first page, sneezed or squinted at each subsequent appearance. Whoever stuttered, spoke every sentence in his role with a stutter; whoever had a grotesque pronunciation, pronounced every word grotesquely. The most horrid and nerve-racking examples of the use of this device are to be found in Balzac, where everything is to be found, of best and worst, that the novelist's art can make use of. But the artifice seldom results in complete visibility; it merely suggests it, as the sound of a snore through the wall of a hotel bedroom suggests that there is some one sleeping next door. The characters thus described remain, as it were, concealed behind their idiosyncrasies.

Sometimes one is inclined to think that visibility is achieved simply by the author's own intense power of seeing his characters in their habit as they lived, and by his ability to reproduce the colour of his vision in words. No novelist has ever possessed this power to the same degree as Tolstoy. That lifted upper lip of the poor little wife of Prince Andrew, the Maslova's squint, Karénine's way of cracking his dry finger-joints—though so little



emphasized in comparison with the tricks of Dickens's people, they haunt us like Becky's sandy hair and green eyes, like the sultry splendour of Beatrix Esmond. Undoubtedly this rare gift of passionate contemplation and vivid picturing does help to make bodily visible the characters of these two supremely equipped novelists; but what of certain other novelists who did not possess it, and yet confer visibility on their creations? Do we any of us really know what Mrs. Proudy looked like, or Archdeacon Grantly, or even the great Lady Glencora? Who ever actually *saw* a Dostoyevsky or a Turgenev character with the eyes of the flesh? And as for Jane Austen's, one almost wonders if she ever saw them bodily herself, so little do their physical peculiarities seem to concern her.

The fact is that on all sides perplexity awaits us. We certainly do not think of Jane Austen's characters as disembodied intelligences, though she has favoured us with such scant glimpses of their physical appearance; while George Meredith, who has spent the richest of epithets and epigrams on his personages, though some of them have the appearance of life, has evoked none as tangible, substantial, solidly planted on the earth that we ourselves tread, as the least of Jane Austen's creations. Trollope, again, is perplexingly careless in the matter of physical word-painting. The portraits of his men are reduced to a minimum (though the touches he gives are vigorous); while the colours he uses to portray his women, and more especially his heroines, are out of the same scantily-supplied paint-box which served Scott, Jane Austen and all their lesser contemporaries. Yet, if we have a nodding acquaintance with the lavishly portrayed Meridithians, the Hardings, Grantlys and Pallisers are our very kin! How then is the magic wrought?

It is a truism to say that it all depends on the measure of the novelist's genius. Of course; but what is the particular faculty of genius that produces, by means so different, the identical effect of visibility? Sometimes one inclines to ascribe it to a quality of *quietness*; almost to that slow taking of pains which was once thought the fundamental attribute of genius. Certainly the great novelists, even those (chiefly those) who packed their pages with immortality while the printer's devil waited in the passage, seem never to have written in a hurry. There were days when, obviously, they had no time to correct their grammar or make sure of their syntax; hardly ever a day when they could not let their characters ripen and round themselves under the sunlight of a steady contemplation. It must be, then, surely, this mysterious faculty, something so intimate and compelling, so much like a natural process, that outward accidents, the hurry and worry of the surface, can never check, can seldom even distort it. Once called into life the beings thus created continue their dumb germination in the most tormented mind, if that mind be a great novelist's; and by the time they are born into the book which is their world they are such well-constituted organisms that they live on in our world after theirs has ended.

No one, perhaps, has exhibited as completely as Tolstoy the result of the novelist's intense absorption in his creatures. All those who have attempted the art of fiction, or even considered it critically, know the initial difficulty of making the reader of a thickly populated novel immediately distinguish between the various characters as they first appear. Experience of course helps the novelist in this respect; he will avoid crowding his opening pages; he will be careful to give his readers time

to get used to one character before he 'brings on' another; he will above all sternly exclude the supernumeraries who are forever clamouring for an engagement, attracting attention by their antics, and trying to persuade him of their eventual usefulness. These principles are elementary—but look how the great men defy them! Tolstoy, especially, juggles with this particular difficulty. Re-read *Resurrection* with this technical problem in mind, and admire the way in which, as he follows Prince Nekludov from point to point in his long hunt after the Maslova and his own soul, Tolstoy indulges himself in the delight of calling into rounded visibility each judge, juryman, lawyer, prison official, turnkey, soldier, prostitute, convict or provincial magistrate or administrator, with whom Nekludov comes in contact in his agonizing pilgrimage from Saint Petersburg to Siberia! Tolstoy knew that most of these people, whose physical appearance, clothes, voices and tricks of speech he so carefully reproduces, would appear only once in the course of his tale; but he knew also that they were not supernumeraries, but 'stuff o' the conscience' to the tortured Nekludov, and therefore he painted them as vividly as his unhappy hero saw them. Perhaps no other novelist has achieved just this *tour de force*; and it is of interest as showing the creator's power of identifying himself with his creature, and visualizing with terrible completeness every face and figure burnt upon Nekludov's 'lidless eyes in Hell'.

But it is a harder task to sustain visibility than to evoke it for a moment; and here again Tolstoy is equalled only (and never surpassed) by Jane Austen, Balzac, Thackeray—and at times by Stendhal, Flaubert and Trollope. Can any one, for instance, after seeing Emma Bovary under the umbrella opened against the spring shower, in the

first pages of her life-history, forget for a moment how she looked, and who she was? The survival of her name is there to attest her visibility. But though Charles Bovary, M. Homais, Madame de Rênal, Count Mosca, his Duchess, and many of Trollope's people have escaped out of their books and still live with us, their number is small compared with the throng of friends and companions with whom the four greatest of live-givers have blessed us.

Balzac, Jane Austen, Thackeray, Tolstoy: almost invariably, when these touched the dead bones they arose and walked. Not only stood, struck life-like attitudes, did the Mme. Tussaud business with an uncanny air of reality, but actually progressed or retrograded, marked time or spurted forward, in our erratic human way; and came out at the end of their tales disfigured, altered, yet still the same, as we do when life has thoroughly dealt with us. These four novelists alone—with Proust perhaps as an only fifth—could give this intense and unfailing visibility to their central characters as well as to the episodic figures of the periphery; and it is plain that, though their results are identical, and Mr. Woodhouse is as warm to the touch as Henry Esmond, the procedure in each case was profoundly different.

To say this is perhaps to acknowledge that the problem is insoluble, the 'trick' not to be detected; yet we may still conjecture that a common denominator is after all to be found in the patient intensity of attention which these great novelists concentrated on each of their imagined characters, in their intimate sense of the reality of what they described, and in some secret intuition that the barrier between themselves and their creatures was somehow thinner than the page of a book.

CYRIL CONNOLLY

## THE POSITION OF JOYCE

James Joyce has brought out a new book. It is a fragment of a longer one, and is called *Anna Livia Plurabelle*. We are used to the reputations of authors fluctuating from year to year, but Mr. Joyce's also fluctuates from place to place. He is resented in Ireland, neglected in England, admired by a set in America, and idolized by another in France. In every nation there is a general public and a literary public. In Ireland the general public is provincial and priest-ridden. It cannot forgive Joyce his blasphemy nor his contemptuous parodies of Irish jingoism. The other, the smaller public, has chosen escape in a romantic return to the past, characterized by a special lyric note of easy and indefinable melancholy born of self-pity. Joyce is a realist, and out of touch intellectually with that generation. 'Michael Roberts remembers forgotten beauty. He presses in his arms the loveliness which has long faded from the world. I desire to press in my arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world.' Thus Joyce's only disciples in Ireland are the young realists of the post-rebellion period. In England the literary public is governed by good taste. Cautious as the cenotaph, the critics decide the value of a book in terms of 'delicious' and 'charming'. The general public is equally conservative, and the fate of a book like *Ulysses*, so hopelessly unpresentable when submitted to the Chelsea canon, is decided in advance. It is in America, where there is a large and less sophisticated general public, and in Paris, where there are a great many young writers

anxious to experiment in literary form, that the 'Ulysses generation' has grown up.

Mr. Forster, in his lectures on the novel, states perfectly the English attitude to Joyce, the bad bogey-man of letters. '*Ulysses*,' he writes, 'is a dogged attempt to cover the universe with mud, an inverted Victorianism, an attempt to make coarseness and dirt succeed where sweetness and light failed, a simplification of the human character in the interests of Hell.' It is also an 'epic of grubbiness and disillusion . . . a superfetation of fantasies, a monstrous coupling of reminiscences . . . in which smaller mythologies swarm and pullulate, like vermin between the scales of a poisonous snake'. 'Indignation in literature,' adds Mr. Forster, 'never quite comes off,' and the passage I have quoted does little except to express the general attitude of English culture towards novelty, and to prove that the vocabulary of scandalized vituperation is drawn from the reptile-house in every age.

'Indignation' is not a quality of Joyce's work, but 'the raging of Joyce seems essentially fantastic, and lacks the note for which we shall be listening soon,' continues Mr. Forster, who proceeds to classify *Ulysses* as belonging to the period of *Zuleika Dobson*. Let us get a clear idea of *Ulysses* before we try to estimate the later work of its author. James Joyce is, by temperament, a mediaevalist. He has always been in revolt against his two greatest limitations, his Jesuit education and his Celtic romanticism. Each of his books reveals a growing fear of beauty; not because life is not beautiful, but because there is something essentially false and luxurious in the 'Celtic Twilight' approach to it. This tinsel element is very strong in Joyce's early poems, and is contrasted with an equally pronounced repulsion from it in 'The Portrait of the Artist'.

In *Ulysses* he has got it in hand, and is experimenting in other approaches to beauty, the pagan simplicity of Mrs. Bloom's reverie, the mathematical austerity of the catechism which precedes it. Only Stephen Dedalus, the Hamlet young man, thinks automatically in the diction of the Celtic Twilight; but in him the remorse, the guilty sense of loneliness which attacks brave but weak men who destroy the religious framework of their youth, has fused with his minor poet melancholy, and gives to his reverie the quality of a Greek chorus. Stephen Dedalus, in fact, equips the Ulysses generation with a fatalism, a dramatization of their own forebodings, and with the mediaeval quality so rare in America, so reduced in England, so rife in Europe—the Tragic Sense of life. This is the great link between Joyce and Proust, otherwise so misleadingly compared. Both, one an Irishman and one a Jew, possess the tragic intelligence, the idea that life can only be appreciated, can only be lived even, if the intelligence is used to register all the beauty and all the intimacy that exists in ironic contrast to the unrelieved gloom of squalor and emptiness, mediocrity, disease and death. 'For all our wit and reading do but bring us to a truer sense of sorrow.' The whole climax of *Ulysses* is a single moment of intimacy, when Bloom, the comic character, rescues Stephen in a drunken brawl. Bloom had a son who died, Stephen a father who is alive; but for this instant of spiritual paternity all the swelter of that urban summer, all the mesembrian pub-crawls of Bloom and Stephen, the vermin and the scales and the serpents move into place. The central emotion of *Ulysses* is not indignation, but remorse; and remorse, though perhaps second-rate in life, is an emotion which entirely comes off in literature. Expiation and the sense of doom,

which is the essence of Greek tragedy, are only a variation of this feeling; and though remorse seems so feebly static in real people, the very tranquillity and remoteness from acts lend it a glassy literary beauty. In *Ulysses* Stephen goes in the consciousness of having hastened his mother's death by his atheism, Bloom feels obscurely his father's suicide and the troubled history of his people, while all Ireland seems listlessly aware of its destiny. Perhaps the most typical scene in *Ulysses* is that in which Stephen, who has run away from the squalor of his father's house, comes across his young sister also trying to escape her environment without the help he might have given:

He turned and halted by the slanted book cart. Two-pence each, the huckster said, four for sixpence. Tattered pages. *The Irish Beekeeper. Life and miracles of the Curé of Ars. Pocket Guide to Killarney.*

'I might find there one of my pawned school prizes.'

'What are you doing here, Stephen?'

Dilly's high shoulders and shabby dress.

Shut the book quick. Don't let see.

'What are you doing,' Stephen said.

A Stuart face of nonsuch Charles, lank locks falling at its sides. It glowed as she crouched feeding the fire with broken boots. I told her of Paris. Late lieabed under a quilt of old overcoats, fingering a pinchbeck bracelet; Dan Kelly's token.

'What have you there?' Stephen asked.

'I bought it from the other cart for a penny,' Dilly said, laughing nervously. 'Is it any good?'

My eyes they say she has. Do others see me so? Quick, far and daring, shadows of my mind.



He took the coverless book from her hand. Chard-enal's *French Primer*.

'What did you buy that for?' he asked. 'To learn French?'

She nodded, reddening and closing tight her lips.

Show no surprise, quite natural.

'Here,' Stephen said, 'it's all right. Mind Maggie doesn't pawn it on you. I suppose all my books are gone.'

'Some,' said Dilly, 'we had to.'

She is drowning. Agenbite. Save her, Agenbite. All against us. She will drown me with her, eyes and hair. Lank coils of seaweed hair around me, my heart, my soul. Salt green death.

We.

Agenbite of Inwit. Inwit's Agenbite.

Misery.

This quotation reveals many other aspects of the book; the old words for remorse, for instance, become one of those snowball phrases with which *Ulysses* is packed. Appearing continually in the characters' day-dreams, they gather momentum from each association, echoing through the chapters till they are charged by the end with as much personality as the thinkers themselves. Then the drabness of the scene, the halting, trite dialogue illustrate the other side of *Ulysses*: the attempt to create beauty out of city life, and style out of the demotic English which is spoken in them. Every year more people's lives are passed in towns than in the country; but while there is a whole vocabulary of rural beauty, there is so far only the slenderest aesthetic of cities, the roughest technique in appreciating them. What Baudelaire and Laforgue did for Paris, or Mr. T. S. Eliot for modern London, Joyce

has done for Dublin: and at a time when Yeats and Synge had monopolized the Gaelic side of the Irish, he was able to create a language out of the demotic commercial speech of the anglicised burgers of Dublin itself. Literary English has become very hackneyed, as a glance at any book of essays or a preface to an anthology at once will show, and Joyce in *Ulysses* set out to revive it by introducing the popular colloquial idiom of his own city, by forming new words in the Greek fashion of compound epithets, by telescoping grammar, by using the fresh vocabulary of science manuals, public-houses, or Elizabethan slang. Here, for instance, are two quotations, one to illustrate the city aesthetic, the note of Celtic melancholy introduced into the descriptions of an urban summer sunset by the hill of Howth, where Bloom had once made love; the other, an example of Joyce's highly latinised English, which produces an effect of austere rhetoric and elaborate original rhythm.

A long lost candle wandered up the sky from Myrus' bazaar in search of funds for Mercer's hospital and broke, drooping, and shed a cluster of violet but one white stars. They floated, fell: they faded. The shepherd's hour: the hour of holding: hour of tryst. From house to house, giving his everwelcome double knock, went the nine o'clock postman, the glow-worm's lamp at his belt gleaming here and there through the laurel hedges. And among the fine young trees a hoisted linstock lit the lamp at Leahy's Terrace. By screens of lighted windows, by equal gardens, a shrill voice went crying, wailing, '*Evening Telegraph*—stop press edition! Result of the Gold Cup races!' And from the door of Dignam's house a boy ran out and called. Twittering

the bat flew here, flew there. Far out over the sands the coming surf crept, gray. Howth settled for slumber, tired of long days, of yumyum rhododendrons (he was old) and felt gladly the night breeze lift, ruffle his fell of ferns. He lay but opened a red eye unsleeping, deep and slowly breathing, slumberous but awake. And far on Kish bank the anchored lightship twinkled, winked, at Mr. Bloom.

\* \* \*

What play of forces, inducing inertia, rendered departure undesirable?

The lateness of the hour, rendering procrastinatory: the obscurity of the night, rendering invisible: the uncertainty of Thoroughfares rendering perilous: the necessity for repose, obviating movement: the proximity of an occupied bed, obviating research: the anticipation of warmth [human] tempered with coolness [linen] obviating desire and rendering desirable: the statue of Narcissus, sound without echo, desired desire.

Besides this he directed a stream of parody against all the whimsy and archaism latent in English prose style. It is indeed as an enemy of 'literature' that Joyce really might appear to Mr. Forster as working 'in the interests of Hell'. Though he did not originate the 'stream of consciousness' as a form of writing, he saw that by recording the thoughts of each character he could take short-hand liberties with their syntax as well as get nearer to their selves. He too, among those who have used this method, is the only one who has realized that people, besides thinking differently, think at a different pace. Mrs. Woolf, whose *Mrs. Dalloway* is in many ways a feminine adaptation of one idea of *Ulysses* to English good

taste, tends to make all her characters think in the same tempo. She gives us anatomical slices, not human beings, but sections of them, which portray the doubts, the tendernesses, the half-hopes and half-fears of the human mind conceived all in the same mood of genteel despair. Bloom, Mrs. Bloom, Stephen, however, and the nameless narrator of one chapter, all have mental processes which are quite incomparable with each other—Bloom's mean, good-tempered, second-rate, scientific curiosity colours all his commonplace meditations. Stephen's bitterness, imagination, and petulant intellect quicken feverishly the pulse of his thought. The racy, cynical and shamelessly prejudiced gusto of the Nameless One transforms his narrative into the whirl of the winds of Aeolus that it is meant to symbolize, while elaborate journalese retards the speed of the book for those chapters when the action is at a standstill. Lastly the even breathing of Mrs. Bloom times with her steady physical reverie, her pagan meditation so free of Stephen's mediaeval anguish, Bloom's scepticism, or all the problems which faced the morning of the one, the evening of the other, and their common night.

The link between the new work of Joyce and *Ulysses* is chiefly one of language; though both are united by the same preoccupation with the aesthetic of cities, with the absurdity of our Jewish-American democracy, and with the capacity for being beautiful which this democracy yet retains.

Here are two quotations, one showing the Hill of Howth treated again in a symbolic manner, the other the praise of Dublin, rhetorical as cities are—Earwicker (the Danish castle) is bragging to his wife, the Liffey, of all he has done for her. I have noted it in the text so that the complexity of the portmanteau language may be gauged:

'Old Whitehowth is speaking again. Pity poor White-oath! Deargone mummeries, goby. Tell the woyld I have lived true thousand hells. Pity please, lady, for poor O.W. in this profoundest snobbing I have caught. Nine dirty years mine age, hairs white, mummery failing, deaf as Adder. I askt you, dear lady, to judge on my tree by our fruits. I gave you of the tree. I gave two smells, two eats: my happy blossoms, my all falling fruits of my boom. Pity poor Haveth Children Everywhere with Mudder. That was Communicator a former Colonel.'

'... And I built in Urbs in Rure for mine elskede, my shiny brows, an earth closet wherewithin to be quit in most convenience from her sabbath needs: did not I festfix my unniverseries, wholly rational and got alike; [three Dublin universities national and godlike with Trinity to suggest the holy] was not I rosetted on two stelas of little Egypt, had not (1) rockcut readers, hieros, gregos, and democriticos; [the Rosetta stone] and by my syvendialed changing charties Hibernska ulitzas made not I [allusion to superimposing a street map on an older one and rotating it to find what streets lie along a Roman road. Ulitza is the Slav for a street, but in this case is also a prophecy of Ulysses and his labours] to pass through 12 Threadneedles and Newgade and Vicus Veneris to cooinsight. [Allusions to Ulysses, to Newgate prison on the Roman Road.] Oi polled ye many, but my fews were chosen: and I set up twinminsters, the pro and the con [Christchurch and the pro-Cathedral] woven of peeled wands and attachatouchy floodmud [Italian root, 'sticky'] arched for the convenanters and shinner's rifuge; all truant trulls

made I come pull, all rubbeling gnomes I pushed, go go; and thirdly for ewigs I did reform and restore for my smuggy piggiesknees her paddy palace on the cross-knoll [St. Patrick's restored] and added there unto a shallow laver to put out her hell fire and posied windows for her oriel house and she sass her nach, chilly-bombom and 40 bonnets, upon the altarstane, may all have mossyhonours!

'I hung up at the Yule my pigmy suns helphelped of Kettil Flashnose [electric lights introduced in Dublin under Kettle, the chief of the electricians and descendant of Kettle Flatnose, an original Dane settler] for the supper hour of myfrigid one, coulomba mea, frimosa mia, through all Livania's vouted ampire from anods to cathods, and from the topazolites of Mourne by Arklow's sapphire seamanslure and Waterford's hook and crook lights to the polders of Hy Kinsella [old Danish beacons].'

The ordinary man of letters, when faced with modern civilization, plays the ostrich with its head in the sand. A very whimsical, arch, mock apologetic and well-subsidized ostrich too. In fact, they are the paid entertainers of democracy, the jesters who are allowed the licence of bewailing the rattle of hansom cabs, of beginning every sentence with 'I must needs avow that I have never seen eye to eye with those who', and ending 'nevertheless, to my thinking, when all is said and done. . . .' Of course, there is no law compelling any one to belong to his period; but not to belong to it, is to take sanctuary, to eke out a whimsical existence and an archaic style in a half-timbered Utopia, visited, like an Elizabethan teashop, by the most insipid of the public you would like to avoid. If

*Ulysses* is largely a parody of literary manners, a dissatisfaction with style, the new work of Joyce is a parody of language, an attempt to create a new vocabulary for literature itself. And both, which readers are unwilling to see, are meant to be funny. After all, the ballad of the Jabberwock has passed into the accepted treasury of English humour; yet when the method Carroll used to reinforce words with double meanings is applied to contemporary prose, which surely needs it, the result is that we label the originator mad.

Literary language in England has become very far removed from conversation, nor is it able to profit, like American, from a rich background of polyglot slang. All literary words in addition tend to be used, especially by Georgian poets, without a due conviction of their meaning, and this depreciates the currency so that most epithets become like the dumb notes on an old piano, which go down when they are sounded, but never come up. The best instance of this is the penultimate passage of *The Oxford Book of English Prose*. The new language of Joyce is only a kind of piano-tuning, tightening up certain words by grafting fresher foreign equivalents on to them, approximating them to other words to strengthen their own vigour, above all by punning them freely, it gives words a synthetic meaning, either to express life, or simply to make a series of academic jokes with. The experiment may be a failure, just as Esperanto or phonetic spelling may be a failure, but there is nothing really contrary to reason in the idea itself. The chief defect of Mr. Joyce's new language is that, so far, it has swamped the lyrical quality of his other prose writings; he has not attempted purple patches in it so much as rhetorical imitations of them. Here is the close of a fable called 'The Mookse and the Gripes', which can

be compared with Bloom's city sunset, quoted above:

The shades began to glidder along the banks, dusk unto dusk, and it was as glooming as gloaming could be in the waste of all peaceable wolds. The mookse had a sound eyes right but he could not all hear. The Gripes had light ears left yet he could but ill see. He ceased. And he ceased and it was so dusk of both of them. But still one thought of the deeps he would profound on the morrow and still the other thought of the scrapes he would escape if he had luck enough.

The new book is full of fables, because the whole of the first part is really a *surréaliste* approach to the prehistory of Dublin, the myths and legends of its origin, Duke Humphrey and Anna Livia, the mountain and the river, from a black reach of which the city took its name. The first words 'riverrun brings us back to Howth Castle and Environs' suggest the melodies to follow. All the urban culture of Ireland is by origin Scandinavian; and, to emphasize this, Joyce has introduced the greatest possible amount of Norse words into his description of it. There are four parts to the new work of Joyce, the first is a kind of air photograph of Irish history, a celebration of the dim past of Dublin, as was *Ulysses* of its grimy present; the second is an interlude in a barn near Chapelizod; some children are playing, and react unconsciously the old stories of the first (Iseult of Ireland linking in the suburb's name); and the third part, jumping from the 'past events leave their shadows behind' of the first, to 'coming events cast their shadows before', deals in four sections with the four watches of one night. As this is literary criticism, I cannot go into the metaphysics of Joyce's new book, which are based on the history of Vico and on a new philosophy



of Time and Space; but two other things emerge, the same preoccupation of the author with his native town, his desire to see all the universe through that small lense, and his poetic feeling for the phases of the dusk, for that twilight which originally got the Celtic revival its name. The book opens in a museum with a mummified description of the battle of Waterloo:

‘This the way to the museyroom. Mind your hats goan in! Now yiz are in the Willingdone museyroom. This is a Prooshious gun. This is a ffrinch. Tip. This is the flag of the Prooshious, the Cap and Soracer. This is the bullet that byng the flag of the Prooshious. This is the ffrinch that fire on the Bull that bang the flag of the Prooshious Saloos the crossgun! up with your pike and fork! Tip. (Bullsfoot! Fine!) This is the triple-won hat of Lipoleum. Tip. Lipoleumhat. This is the Willingdone on his same white harse, the Cokenhape.’

Monotonous as the tap of a lecturer’s pole, rusty, archaic, the old contraptions of history reveal themselves, the past lumbers slowly into being under the touch of the chirpy guide. The museyroom, the sightseers, moving dustily among the dregs of the forgotten battle, clank into place in the uncouth language, we are looking at the earth from a long way away, perhaps as one might look at it by overtaking the light rays—by turning a telescope on the Dark Ages, from some planet so far that it still could watch them going on.

So, now idler’s winds turning pages on pages, annals of themselves timing, the cycles, bring fassilwise to pass how. 1132 A.D. Men like to ants or emmets wonder upon a groot hwide Whallfisk which lay in a Runnel. Blubby wares up at Ublanium.

Figures emerge from the chronicle, in this early Dublin, Irishman meets Norseman, typical of all misunderstanding since the days of Babel. The Irishman begins:

‘Hop! In the name of Anem this carl on the kopje a parth alone who the Joebiggarr be he? Forshapen his pigmaid hoagshead, shroonk his plodsfoot, me seemeth a dragon man. . . . He is almonthst on the kiek fieg by here, is Comestipple Sacksounn, be it junipery or febrewery, marracks or alebill, or the ramping riots of prouriose and froriose. What a quhare soort of a mahan. It is evident the minchindaddy. He can prapsposterous the pillowy way to Hirculos pillar. Scuse, us, chorley guy! You tollerday donsk? N. You tolkatiff scowegian? Nn. You spigotty anglese? Nnn? You phonio Saxo? Nnnn. Clear all so! Tis a Jute. Let us swop hats and excheck a few strong verbs weak oach eather yapyzard abast the bloody creeks.’

Jute: Yutah!

Mutt: Mukk’s pleasurad.

Jute. Are you jeff?

Mutt: Somehards.

Jute: But you are not jeffmute?

Mutt: Noho. Only an utterer.

Jute: Whoa! Whoat is the matter with you?

Mutt: I became a stun a stunner.

By and by other heroes appear, Shaun the Rabelaisian postman, sly Shem, his writer brother, H. C. Earwicker (here comes everybody) (alias the Hill of Howth), the typical great man of the new democracy, and the lovely Anna Livia—his bride.

Writers are on safest ground when they confine themselves to what interests them, and the key to this obscure

and difficult book is the author's *pietas* for his native city. Joyce has lived more in the classical tradition of great writers than in the Victorian comfort of the men of letters of to-day. His life resembles that of the old Greek poets, the youth spent in city politics and local revels, then banishment to foreign places, the publication of a masterpiece after ten years, as Dedalus promised, with his weapons 'silence, exile and cunning'. Now his whole art is applied to celebrating his native town, though his feeling for Dublin, its squares and stews and beery streets, its hills and foreshore, seagoing Liffey and greenbanked Dodder, is as different from the provincial quality of Irish patriotism as it is like to the pagan sentiment of birthplace, to the tag '*dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos*', of Virgil and Theocritus, the feelings of Sophocles for Colonus and Odysseus for Ithaca.

*Anna Livia* is an episode from this book describing the legend of the Liffey. Two old washerwomen stand on each side of the stripling river and gossip away as they pound the clothes. ('O tell me all about Anna Livia.') They talk of Earwicker's affair with her under his other identity, of Duke Humphrey, and gradually their language breaks into a melody of water music, a kind of paean like the praise of the brook Kishon into which the names of every conceivable river is brought as an onomatopaeic train-bearer:

. . . . She sideslipped out by a gap in the devil's glen while Sally her nurse was sound asleep in a shoot, and fell over a spillway before she found her stride and lay and wriggled in all the stagnant black pools of rain under a fallow coo and she laughed with her limbs all aloft and a whole grove of maiden hawthorns blushing

and looking askance upon her. . . . And after that she wore a garland for her hair. She pleated it. She plaited it. Of meadow grass and riverflags, the bulrush and the water weed, and of fallen griefs of weeping-willow.

Occasionally the charwomen break in with their own troubles:

‘O my bach! my back! my back! I’d want to go to Aches-les-Pains . . . spread on your bank and I’ll spread on mine. It’s wat I’m doing. Spread! It’s turning chill. Der went is rising.’

Gradually the growing stream carries them apart as the night falls, for they are standing on the two banks of the infant river like a moving stairway, and the gap between them has widened as the Liffey leaps, in the words of her song, ‘to the slobes of the Tolka and the shores of Clontarf to hear the gay aire of my salt troublin’ bay and the race of the saywint up my ambushure’. When night falls, the old women shouting across in the dark cannot understand each other; still gossiping, they are transformed into an elm and to a stone, the strange obscurity is about them of the old myths from which they have emerged, and the *motiv* of the past of Ireland is re-echoed in their dumb blocklike language; for the Mookse and the Gripes had suffered the same fate, mortal beside the immortal river:

‘. . . and it was never so thoughtful of either of them. And there were left now only an elm tree and but a stone. O! Yes! and Nuvoletta, a lass.’

The end of the *Anna Livia* marks another of Joyce’s extraordinary descriptions of dusk:

'Whawk? Can't hear with the waters of. The chittering waters of. Flittering bats, fieldmice bawk talk. Ho! Are you not gone ahome? What Tom Malone? Can't hear with the bawk of bats, all the liffeying waters of. Ho, talk save us! My foos wont moos. I feel as old as yonder elm. A tale told of Shaun or Shem? All Livia's daughtersons. Dark hawks hear us. Night! Night! My no head halls. I feel as heavy as yonder stone. Tell me of John or Shem? Who were Shem and Shaun the living sons and daughters of? Night now! Tell me, tell me, tell me, elm! Night night! Tell me tale of stem or stone. Beside the rivering waters of, mother and mithering waters of hither and thithering Night!' [All this has to be read as carefully as it has been written.]

The best way to read Joyce's new book, apart from this rare reprint of *Anna Livia*, is in a quarterly called *Transition*, edited by Americans living in Paris. The contents are often as grotesque as the idea is enterprising. But we have no paper for literary experiment in England, and literature is, after all, as technical a business as medicine or engineering. *Transition* is sometimes a very silly paper, and sometimes intensely amusing for, like most rebel journals, its satire is surer than its originality; but it is the only one which publishes the honest, sometimes fascinating, often incoherent research of those who take new literature seriously in every country. Of course, it is not possible to pronounce a verdict on Joyce's work when it is so fragmentary. The best that this article can hope to prove is that the new work of Joyce is respectable and readable. There is nothing insane in its conception nor bogus in its execution. Though to many a spinster fancy it probably will continue to lack the 'note

for which we will be listening soon', to others, it promises amusement and a very interesting and strange approach to life and beauty. After all, it is an experiment; we are content to accord the wildest tolerance to the latest unintelligible—even uncommercial—pamphlet of Einstein—can we not admit a little of the same tolerance to something in writing we do not understand? It must be remembered that Joyce, besides being a lover of words, is an Irishman under no obligation whatever to rest content with the English language, and also that, while our Literature, unaware of a decline of the West or a defence of it, grows daily more bucolic and conservative, Continental Letters are nourished on an exhilarating sense of an uncertain future which makes the liberties of their volcano dwellers permissible—and which we are entirely without. Literature is in essence a series of new universes enforced on a tardy public by their creators. This one may be a fake, but it is not from a writer who has previously given us fakes; it may be a failure, but it is surely an absorbing one, and more important than any contemporary successes. I, personally, am biased as a critic by nationality, and by the same feeling for geography and Dublin, but still more by the enthusiasm which comes to everyone when they discover themselves through a book—a service which Joyce, Proust, and Gide have rendered generally to almost all our thinking generation; for me any criticism of *Ulysses* will be affected by a wet morning in Florence, when in the empty library of a villa with the smell of wood-smoke, the faint eavesdrip, I held the uncouth volume dazedly open in the big armchair—Narcissus with his pool before him.

SHANE LESLIE

LINES WRITTEN IN THE  
MONTH'S MIND OF MONA  
DUNN

Dec. 19, 1928—Jan. 19, 1929

Mona of tawny tress and steel-blue eyes  
Like your own forests and the dazzling skies  
Above Canadian snows. Supple and swift  
You let Life tangle, speed and drift.  
Too spirited you vaulted past your hours  
And danced like Spring through times of fruit or flowers.  
But now your vividness is left a dream,  
To us how short and sudden it must seem,  
The rushing lifetime that you found too long—  
Those five-and-twenty years you played among,  
Wherein as mother-wife or lover-maid  
You met Life's watching terrors undismayed,  
Letting the narrow rays of criticism  
Melt softly into Pleasure's rainbow prism.  
But Scorn you only scorned, though lover's tears  
You met with love. You banished strong men's fears.  
How strange your voice was stronger than the Bowl  
To chase away the Shadow from the soul!  
What was the secret in your girlish brain  
To make a stricken man a man again?  
To neither man nor safety making pledge  
With wheel or rein you rode the narrow edge,  
And every peril in your brimming life  
You welcomed carelessly of joy or strife,

Made Love crown one, while strife you quelled with chaff,  
And laughed to find your life was torn to half.  
But you could make disasters prelude fun  
As nights are patched with day and storms with sun.  
So matching man with man, again you laughed  
To ply the wisest with a maiden's craft.  
But all you had of courage, life and charm,  
You flung for friends and kept yourself the harm.  
And all return that men or women gave  
You lavished back as though you scorned to save  
Or scant Life's gifts, since Life was in your gift.  
You lent your lute to Joy and let the rift  
That widened fast between your finger-tips  
Conclude the harmony on Sorrow's lips.  
Death now is all your lover and your groom,  
And both may smile at Life across the tomb.  
With English flowers heaped in candlelight  
Your radiant passing made Death's bridals bright.  
Hope may you find as sure as Love to bless,  
And Love as sure as your unfearings.  
Alone, unstirruped now, you hold your breath  
To ride the pale unbridled horse of Death.



DESMOND MACCARTHY

## IN THE MARGIN OF PROUST

[Continued from last issue]

There are very few novels which deal directly with the experience of an artist, although novels in which one of the characters is a writer, painter, musician or poet are exceedingly common. The artist, especially in relation to his love affairs, seen from outside, is one of the commonest types in fiction. Yet to get an idea of what it *feels* like to be an artist and of the relation of a day's experience to the creative faculty, we have usually to go to the autobiographies, diaries and letters of artists, and these are usually scrappy. For instance, we can learn much more of what it means to be ridden by the twin demons of observation and imagination from reading Henry James's *A Small Boy and Others* than from reading his *Roderick Hudson*. One characteristic which makes *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* a permanently interesting book is that it is an extraordinarily complete account of the life of an intellectual artist; of his unceasing efforts to comprehend life and discover what it is that moves him most profoundly. It is the history of a man whose business in life is to define impressions whether these are visual or emotional. This makes it a thrilling, stimulating, and supporting book to those who feel stirring in them the same impulse to understand and define. We all have a something of the artist in us, and therefore Proust appeals also to those who have no talent for expression or only an inadequate one. Even when the object which Proust succeeds in revealing seems unimportant to the reader,

Proust's pursuit of any particular gleam of beauty or revealing hint about human nature is in every case an object-lesson how to make the most of those moments when we are contemplative artists ourselves. This, to my mind, is the most important aspect of his work; more important than his own picture of life. With that picture of life I have myself many faults to find. There are enormous gaps in it. It has often the pettiness of the man who has been debarred from all action, and of one whose sensibility is so acute that his responses are abnormally retarded (see previous notes), so that no painful impression at any rate impinges on him directly, but sinks at once into his subconscious from which he has to fish it out long afterwards. His own temperament made him exaggerate certain phenomena, homosexuality for instance. Although, at the beginning of *Sodom et Gomorrhe* (*The Cities of the Plain*, translated by C. K. Scott-Moncrieff. Knopf), in his introduction, he notes that those who are born with this humiliating propensity tend either to regard themselves as solitaries, or to conclude that too many others are really like them—if they dared to admit it. Such perverts see cryptic perverts everywhere. His own picture of society suffers from this distortion. His interest in this subject is not so entirely detached and artistic as his interest in other aspects of life. He allows it to sprawl over his book; and the reader, who keeps his head, can often catch Proust falsifying probabilities in this direction. Yet it is natural, apart from his bias, that this subject should have had a peculiar fascination for him: he is always searching for the thing in everyone which makes that human being different from another, and is *implied* in what they do rather than openly expressed in it. Such propensities as these are, of course, typical

of what excites him most as an observer. His skill as a novelist is never more clearly shown than when the narrator at last grasps the key to M. de Charlus's erratic behaviour, so puzzling before. Suddenly all Charlus's inconsistencies become coherent; he is understood.

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Was Proust a snob? This is a minor point, but not an unimportant one. It does not matter if a writer is a snob in private life, but it does matter if that weakness distorts his picture of life. People who deny that there is a difference between an aristocrat and a well-behaved member of the professional classes, and that it is the mark of a snob to suppose that there is, must necessarily think Proust an outrageous snob, for he spends much ingenuity in defining such differences. They interest him enormously. I think, however, we get nearer the truth in saying that *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, though it is the most complete manual for snobs ever written, could never have been written by a snob. The author has, of course, experienced snobbish emotions himself, or he could not detect them so acutely in cryptic snobs (Legrandin, for instance); but he has seen all round his own emotions with the consequence that he is quite as ready to see vulgarity in a Guermantes as in a Verdurin or a Bloch. He delights in noting differences of behaviour, speech and tradition, not only between members of great families and the *bourgeoisie*, but between 'specimens' within classes generally supposed to be homogeneous; within the aristocracy itself, and within the *bourgeoisie*. His picture of French society is that of a society quivering with social competition and spitefulness, but Proust himself moves about in it with the detachment of a classifying

entomologist, with his net, his little boxes, and his pins. His delight in the magnificent markings of, say, a Prince de Guermantes, and in the difference between the bloom upon the wings of 'Oriane', a Mme. de Villeparisis (slightly rubbed) and a Mme. de Cambremer (definitely shabby), is half aesthetic and half scientific. When, as a boy, the hero of the novel begins his investigations in the direction of 'le côté de Guermantes', the owners of historic names have a romantic glamour for him; to him the duchesse de Guermantes then seemed an inhabitant of a far-off fairy world and she herself different from other women. On closer acquaintance he discovers that both she and her set *are* different from the people he was brought up with, but even more different from what he first imagined them to be. He no longer sees Mme. de Guermantes as he saw her in the church of Cambrai, when she was kneeling in the chapel of the dukes of Brabant her ancestors. She turns, on closer acquaintance, into an exquisite creature who inhabits a world which in many respects is petty and spiteful, ignorant and unfeeling—certainly not a world of romance. Glamour is replaced by curiosity. His observation of her and her peculiar code of manners becomes then as detached as his observation of his servant Françoise and her ways of looking at life. The resemblances between the speech and social code of servants and those of the Guermantes interest him as much as the differences between them. Nor does he give the palm to the aristocratic conception of what is dignified behaviour compared with that of his own class.

When a critic is arguing against what he believes to be a false diagnosis, he is always apt to overstate his case; but what, to my mind, refutes this charge of snobbishness

is that Proust's picture of 'society' is entirely free from contempt for people who do *not* possess the characteristics of those at the top, while such characteristics never for a moment blind him to the insensitiveness and stupidity which may accompany them. If, in this respect, he is compared with most other novelists, the comparison will be found to be greatly in favour of Proust. Balzac's picture of society is a more beglamoured one; it is even ridiculously and vulgarly so, besides being ill-informed. If you compare Proust with some English novelists, W. H. Mallock for example (no mean novelist by the bye), the difference is startling. In Mallock's books the identification of 'good' with 'good form' is carried to a pitch at times painful; all his well-born characters are either superior beings or it is obvious that the author loves them much more than the others. Now that is the snobbish point of view. Even Meredith and Henry James never succeeded in disassociating so completely as Proust elegance and the marks of rank from virtues and qualities which do not necessarily accompany them. They were not nearly so interested in studying such distinctions as Proust was, but neither were they so detached when they did so. Proust has the preoccupations of the snob, but is peculiarly free from snobbish prejudices.

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In one respect, Proust's picture of the French aristocracy strikes the English observer as strange. We are looking, it must be remembered, at only a small section of it, whose sense of their own importance separates them in their own eyes, not only from other classes, but from many people in their own. Charlus informs the young Proust that there are, perhaps, a dozen families

in France who count; the rest are as insignificant, from the Guermantes point of view, as the middle-class. There is no difference between Charlus's attitude towards Proust himself and the Cambremers, who are an ancient and noble family. I have never set foot in the Faubourg St. Germain, and therefore I cannot check Proust's account of the people in it, but what strikes any one who has come in contact with people in a similar relation to the rest of society in England is that, if Proust is not exaggerating, the social atmosphere of the aristocracy in France must be different from what it is in England. And the difference is marked. The 'note' of English aristocratic society is self-confidence; in France it seems to be a restless anxiety to make others aware that they are themselves entitled to peculiar respect, either by treating others with an exaggerated affability, or with covert or open insolence. In England, this is rather the mark of those who are on the climb, not of those who were born at the top. Similar people in England may snub those whom they think too familiar or pushing, but they are not perpetually preoccupied with protecting or with flaunting their own pride. It would be difficult for an English aristocrat not to think the world which Proust describes as rather ignobly and nervously diffident. The English equivalent of Mme. de Guermantes would not bother her head whether she could further emphasize her own social distinction by going to, or not going to, a particular party: she would go if she wanted to, or stay away if she did not. That an English aristocrat in the position of Charlus should, at the close of the Verdurin's party, boast with radiant self-satisfaction that no other man in France could have induced so many exclusive people to come, is nearly inconceivable. Can you im-

agine, say, a Duke of Devonshire swaggering to Mme. Verdurin in that way? I may be wrong, but Proust's aristocrats strike me as having the social outlook which, in England, is the mark of the *déclassé* snob of good connexions, who has to be always hinting that he is more important than he appears for fear nobody will believe it. I cannot think that this is an accurate picture of the Faubourg St. Germain. But it makes most excellent comedy, so the reader cannot regret it. It gains plausibility, perhaps, from the fact that in France the set which Proust describes are only *heraldically* distinguished from the rest of mankind, not by any effective importance. The English aristocracy, though they are losing their power rapidly and have lost nearly all of it, have still, nevertheless, no small share in the life of the nation; their traditions, too, are rooted not in the far past but in quite modern history; mines and misalliances have constantly saved them from impotence, and they are perpetually recruited by the successful of all classes. But in the modern world, a group of people who settle among themselves their relative importance by the order in which their ancestors went out of a room in Louis XIV's reign and judge outsiders by their knowledge of these distinctions, are merely playing a game; one with amusingly elaborate rules and therefore excellent sport for the Comic Muse. Proust watches them with sympathy for their romantic pride, with incessant curiosity and with a smile. He also has an unerring eye for elegance and grace of bearing, whether accompanied or not with dignity of feeling.

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Every critic of any insight has drawn attention to those passages in which Proust describes his effort to understand

the meaning of some experience, or the message some particular object seems to have for him; that is to say, those passages which illustrate most clearly an artist's life. These moments of torturing happiness, in which there is almost more distress than happiness, until expression has been found for them, are the passages which make *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* a unique book. Proust, like many artists, is inclined to be mystical about them. There is no religion, no God in his book, and the place of religious emotion in it is taken by these artist's emotions. This is an unbelieving age, and I am inclined to think that one reason why *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* has been taken so very earnestly by some people, is that it refreshes the hope in them that aesthetic experience may, after all, fill the place of religious experience in their own lives—probably a vain hope. Certainly aesthetic experience led Proust to a kind of philosophy which was to him a sufficient support; but it is a philosophy which is difficult to state and difficult to make one's own; and in so far as it was mystical it strikes me as resting on a confusion of thought: Proust identifies a method of handling experience as an artist with a method of becoming one with Reality. I despair of making it clear to any one who has not read Proust, without an apparent digression.

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The importance of memory in Proust's work I touched upon last month: it is very clearly brought out in Mr. Clive Bell's short book, *Proust* (Hogarth Press), and the following passage from Emerson is worth quoting in this connexion, in which Emerson is writing about memory:

'It is the raw material out of which the intellect moulds her splendid products. A strange process, too, this, by



which experience is converted into thought, as a mulberry leaf is converted into satin. The manufacture goes forward at all hours.

‘The actions and events of our childhood and youth are now matters of calmest observation. They lie like fair pictures in the air. Not so with our recent actions—with the business which we now have in hand. On this we are quite unable to speculate. Our affections as yet circulate through it. We no more feel or know it, than we feel the feet, or the hand, or the brain of our body. The new deed is yet a part of life—remains for a time immersed in our unconscious life. In some contemplative hour, it detaches itself from the life like a ripe fruit, to become a thought of the mind. Instantly, it is raised, transfigured; the corruptible has put on incorruption. Henceforth it is an object of beauty, however base its origin and neighbourhood. Observe, too, the impossibility of antedating this act. In its grub state, it cannot fly, it cannot shine, it is a dull grub. But suddenly, without observation, the selfsame thing unfurls beautiful wings, and is an angel of wisdom. So is there no fact, no event in our private history, which shall not, sooner or later, lose its adhesive, inert form, and astonish us by soaring from our body into the empyrean. Cradle and infancy, school and playground, the fear of boys, and dogs, and ferules, the love of little maids and berries, and many another fact that once filled the whole sky, are gone already; friend and relative, profession and party, town and country, nation and world, must also soar and sing.’

This is exactly Proust’s doctrine of the relation of memory to Art; and since Life is to him the life of an artist, to Life itself. Proust is a man for whom the present

does not exist in any important sense, except one—as a means of evocation. But he also lays special stress upon the importance of a particular way of remembering. When you sit down to recall the past you can remember much, but this deliberate process is no good; you will find out nothing from it. He would agree with Emerson that it is impossible ‘to antedate’ the revelation; you must wait till some, perhaps trifling, actual incident makes the past unfurl itself and come to life. Proust has described minutely how the taste of a cake, the tinkling of spoon against a cup, the unevenness of the pavement, in his case, led to such sudden revelations. The past came back to him transfigured, because it was now experienced by a god-like observer, detached from the grip and confusion of actualities. To live as far as possible for such moments, and in them, is the Proustian philosophy, his remedy for the sadness and imperfection of life. As a philosophy it has the drawback that to live in the present, and even for the future, is an instinct so strong that only the profoundest disillusionment can subdue it, and then, the less we live in the present as it passes, the less we will have to remember.

The magnitude of Proust’s achievement can be measured only when we take into account that his book, besides being the most careful record of an intellectual artist’s experience, is also a panorama of social life; full of figures as unforgettable as Balzac’s; built up from the observation of minute traits and peculiarities of speech, without the help of those crucial events on which most novelists rely to reveal character to the bottom.

*A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* can be criticised as shapeless, overloaded, digressive, ill-proportioned. It began as a story of Swann’s love and jealousy, which then

sprouted in both directions, backwards and forwards; the book thus becoming a formless collection of curiosities and beautiful things, but also full of the very essence of an artist's experience. The Swann episode is far more self-contained than the book itself. It lies like a half-digested lump in the middle of a sort of protoplasmic monster which has wrapped itself round it. I like that invidious comparison; after all, protoplasm is the basis of life, and Proust's work is astoundingly alive. And if it is asked what service his novel has done us, the question can be answered in his own words:

'Once the novelist has brought us to that state, in which, as in all purely mental states, every emotion is multiplied tenfold, into which his book comes to disturb us as might a dream, but a dream more lucid, and of a more lasting impression than those which come to us in sleep; why, then, for the space of an hour he sets free within us all the joys and sorrows in the world, a few of which only we should have to spend years of our actual life in getting to know, and the keenest, the most intense of which would never have been revealed to us because the slow course of their development stops our perception of them. It is the same in life; the heart changes, and that is our worst misfortune; but we learn of it only from reading or by imagination; for in reality its alteration, like that of certain natural phenomena, is so gradual that, even if we are able to distinguish, successively, each of its different states, we are still spared the actual sensation of change.'

No novelist has ever done such complete justice to the great fact that all things pass and change.

## READERS' REPORTS

*John Brown's Body*, by Stephen Vincent Benét. (Heinemann. 10s. 6d.) An epic of the American Civil War, describing every conceivable kind of scene in every conceivable variety of verse—including prose. Historical, with fictional trimmings. Large, and not fastidious vocabulary. Style vigorous and blunt, sometimes very plain. Copious imagery, often effective. Plenty of poetic sentiment, in places. Rhythms generally good and strong, but often monotonous; much of the ostensible verse is just rhythmical prose, novelist's prose, quite good and vivid at that; the scenes, too, are vividly conceived. Despite all this, does not, I fear, interest me. Why? My taste probably fatally corrupted by Shakespeare, Sheridan, Jane Austen, etc. No big intrusive creation, like Falstaff, to put history's nose out of joint—and at the same time set off the heroics. No wit, no intellectual subtlety. No main narrative complication and *dénouement*. No *individuality* of style. And, finally, no interpretation of life. Describes, it is true, supersession of a rural and more-or-less-alive aristocracy by a civic democracy of machinery and mass. But even so, forbids verdict of 'accursed' or 'blest'; we are to say of this supersession only, 'It happened'. Well, and who cannot say so? A book brim-full of everything except what really matters.

*A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, by J. W. Allen. (Methuen. 21s.) The position of this book as an indispensable work of reference is not likely to be disputed. It is divided into four parts, which deal respectively with Lutheranism and Calvinism—in other words,

Central Europe—England, France, and Italy. Its aim is to summarize the views on political theory, not only of writers already famed like More, Bodin, and Macchiavelli, but of all the intelligent members of different parties who put pen to paper in the form of obscure pamphlets and petitions, and whose writings have generally been regarded, owing to the complexion of the age, as purely religious. Quotations are abundant, and are supplemented by exhaustive references. Those of the English must fill the lover of our language with delight. 'Employ your study,' a pamphleteer exhorted King Henry VIII, 'to leave him (Prince Edward) a commonweal to govern and not an island of brute beasts, among whom the strongest devour the weaker.' Finally, the book is completed by a list of original sources.

Its chief fault, however, if fault it be, is in the title. It is in no sense a history of the political thought of any period, and should be named, instead, an anthology. The author is not, and could not be, an historian. As he admits in the introduction, he is devoured by a terror of generalization, so that inaccurate speech has all but lost its meaning for him; and he assumes that if any argument is logically indefensible, it is therefore, apart from all context, absurd and worthless. The book is in no sense vitiated by this attitude; its scholarship is too profound. Yet the function of the historian is not only to classify his materials, but to interpret them. The title and chapter headings lead the reader to expect, first of all an analysis of the main premises and problems that the political theorists of the period were obliged to face, stated in cardinal generalizations distinguishable among any mass of detail; and then an account, in more or less comparative terms, of how the thinkers of the various countries

dealt with them. Mr. Allen contends that conditions in Europe differed so widely that such a method was impossible. In that case, he should have built his plan upon a comparison of those differences. This criticism is not intended to detract from the book's value. Rather than an edifice, it is a very neat and compactly arranged brickyard, and as such must claim its debt, not from the public, but from the student and the future historian.

*On Mediterranean Shores*, by Emil Ludwig, translated from the German by Eden and Cedar Paul. (Allen & Unwin. 10s. 6d.) Herr Ludwig has been hardly treated by the English intelligentsia. It set him up; it observed the greater public do likewise; it received a painful slap in the face from the *Son of Man*; and it cast him down. Yet, for those who, like myself, spend their lives in an unsuccessful search for books to take to bed and who cannot read novels, *William II*, *Napoleon*, and *Bismarck* were singularly companionable, neither too profound, too 'human', nor too patently false to invite immediate sleep, and possessing the indisputable merit of sustained narrative. Then the publishers announced a travel-book. Now, I thought, I will pay my own small tribute. It is impossible.

His historical allusions are sketchy and commonplace; his moralizings on the rights of lesser peoples and the contrasts of wealth and poverty, merely annoying. Only the great dam at Assouan restores him to sanity. The account of its history and workings, if marred by such phrases as 'life-giving fluid', is interesting, and reveals the suspicion with which British imperialist enterprise is still regarded. Modern Athens is treated unusually, and earns a word of praise instead of the looked-for abuse.

*John Wesley, by Arnold Lunn. (Cassell. 7s. 6d.)* This is a lively, but not very substantial sketch of Wesley's personality and career. Mr. Lunn being more interested in Wesley than in Wesleyanism, and in Wesley's ways than Wesley's ideas, many questions which a reader will naturally ask are left unanswered. His great and imposing qualities, his energy and high breeding, are well painted: the odd twist in his judgement where women were concerned is neither concealed nor exaggerated. Mr. Lunn sees his hero safely through more than one ridiculous situation without making him ludicrous. But he does not pretend to give a full account either of Wesley's teaching or of the growth of his society.

*English Thought in the Nineteenth Century, by D. C. Somervell. (Methuen. 6s.)* Mr. Somervell describes his book as a companion either to the history or the literature of the nineteenth century. Readers of his *Disraeli and Gladstone* will know what merits to expect, and they will find them. The points are chosen with judgement, clearly arranged and presented in a very readable form. It is an admirable elementary book, and as a preliminary survey of the ground it can be recommended to any one starting the study of nineteenth-century ideas.

*The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III, by L. B. Namier. Two vols. (Macmillan. 30s.)* 'You think that Parliamentaryism is a form of government. But you are wrong. It is an English game like cricket, and only Englishmen can play it.' This sentence, one of the few excellent remarks to be extracted from the voluminous pages of Spengler, would make a good motto for Mr. Namier's book. Here, set forth with the most patient research and

in fascinating detail, are the rules and usages of *Parliamentarismus* as it was played in 1760. Who went into Parliament? Why? How? What did they expect? What did they get?

The book is an introduction to another subject, English politics during the American Revolution. Mr. Namier has acted wisely in publishing his prolegomena separately. They whet the appetite for the main dish that is to come, and they are at the same time as satisfying as the *hors d'œuvres* of a Russian banquet. There is not, so far as I can recall, any other book which gives a cross-section from this particular angle of any period of English history. The House of Commons in the eighteenth century was certainly one of the most extraordinary institutions in history: the sole survivor of a large family and the sole progenitor of a still larger. Everywhere else in Europe the representative principle was forgotten, and had to be reconstructed: the English gentry carried it unimpaired through the conflicts of two centuries, and delivered it to the shopkeepers of the nineteenth, and the flappers of the twentieth, not so much as an institution, but rather as a form of political thought.

But to what extent was the English Parliament in its classic period representative? If by representative one means freely elected on a consideration of alternative programmes, it was not representative at all. There were no programmes and very little freedom. In fact, there was usually no contest. At the General Election of 1761, which Mr. Namier has analysed, only forty-eight constituencies out of 315 went to the poll. In the others, things had been arranged, and these arrangements Mr. Namier pursues with demure, judicial thoroughness. They reflect the endless varieties of the franchise and the



degrees of influence, interest and patronage which great men, rich men, and the Treasury, might possess or acquire. The line between corruption and the mutual commerce of benevolence and gratitude was subtle, but firm. To throw over a local gentleman for a millionaire from town would have been improper; but for the local gentleman, once elected, not to provide his loyal constituents with appointments in the Post Office, Revenue, Army and Navy would have been unhandsome. But to be in a position to move the dispensers of patronage, the member must himself be of some standing in the House, reasonably assiduous in attendance, reasonably independent, or he will be despised as a place hunter; but not unreasonably factious, or he will make himself a nuisance. The business of Parliament was not to govern, and still less to obstruct the government, but to debate policy, vote taxes and keep the executive from encroaching.

And those who played their part expected their reward, openly in honours, sinecures, appointments, or hardly less honourably in pensions on the Irish establishment or the secret fund. This application of the secret service money is the main source of the legend of Parliamentary corruption. Mr. Namier seems to me to have reduced it to proper proportions and to have put it in the true light. Five hundred men had to be managed somehow, and there was no party machine—nor really any party principles—to manage them with. If, in these circumstances, a few thousand pounds were spent in helping gentlemen to meet the expenses of a London season with a growing family, no very great harm was done. That the system contained much latent mischief, that it could be used to keep a packed House together in defiance of the

wishes of the country, was a truth which a few years later began to dawn on anxious minds.

But this is a topic which belongs to Mr. Namier's next instalment. If, in addition to the learning and independence shown in these two volumes, he possesses the gift of narrative, his place among historians is assured.

#### MR. BENNETT AND CANONS OF CRITICISM

When beginning, last summer, these Notes for the Guidance of Hardened Readers of Detective Novels, I had occasion to warn the said readers that the standards of the ordinary novel-reviewer, useful as these were no doubt for his job, were rather a hindrance than a help to the reviewing of detective novels. I made that remark from a general experience of some years; but I did not expect that one of the best-known names in English literature would so quickly supply me with an example. Only a few weeks ago, Mr. Arnold Bennett, than whom there was once no greater name in journalist-criticism, was induced to read a detective novel, and devoted to detective fiction the whole of his weekly article in the *Evening Standard*. And the conclusion which he reached was that detective fiction is all poor stuff, and not a patch upon Gaboriau, from whose large stock he selected one of the poorest books to beat the English detective novelists. This is especially interesting, because the book which Mr. Bennett was advised to read (Mr. Connington's *Case with Nine Solutions*) is one which, not only in these columns but almost universally among connoisseurs, has been praised as one of the best of the year. Yet Mr. Bennett finds it uninteresting. Why? Because it has not got 'human feeling'. For instance, Mr. Bennett says there are four separate murders in the book: therefore—note the inductive method—

there must have been at least four separate inquests. Not one of these inquests is so much as mentioned, and observe what possibilities of character-drawing and local colour are thereby neglected! Further, there is only one character in the book who is at all memorable as a personality—the detective—and he is not at all interesting. He does nothing but detect. He does not, in fact, like the detectives of Gaboriau and the rest of the French school, fall in love either with the criminal or with the victim, or involve himself in emotional and financial complications with the rest of the *dramatis personae*.

Now, from the point of view of the Art of Literature (with two capital letters), this criticism is no doubt sound. Mr. Connington's work will not go down to posterity like Balzac's or Mr. Bennett's; nor do I imagine that he thinks it will. Only the George Saintsburys of their day will be found reading it in the twenty-first century. But as a current comment on the art of the detective novel (which is quite content with small letters) it is entirely beside the mark. Mr. Connington chose as his theme the severely intellectual type of detective novel, the type which is as nearly akin to a mathematical puzzle as possible. Here is the crime; there are nine possible solutions; and the fascination of the story lies in seeing how the detective, with the smallest possible array of material, succeeds in eliminating all the incorrect ones. It is precisely this economy of material, added to his skill in construction, which makes Mr. Connington's book a good one; and it is precisely this economy which Mr. Bennett, according to his criticism, would like to remove. Who wants the four inquests? They would only confuse the issues and spoil the design. And if the solver of the puzzle had been so ill-advised as to fall in love with any other of the pieces in the

game, one can only say that he would have destroyed the book altogether.

This is not to say, of course, that it is absolutely impossible to combine a 'puzzle plot' with characters round enough to satisfy Mr. Bennett. Mr. Bennett himself, in company with Mr. Phillpotts, once wrote an excellent semi-'tec called *The Sinews of War*. But it is very difficult indeed; and the novelists who have the requisite gifts are generally not interested in puzzles. The band of readers, however, a reputable if not exalted band, who *do* like puzzles to read, are entitled to have what they want, and to demand that their novelist should get his puzzle right first, and then think about his characters. What Mr. Bennett means is that puzzles in novels, *qua* puzzles, do not interest him. He is entitled to his opinion; but it is not a criticism of a novel which aims primarily at setting a puzzle.

One must insist that the detective story has standards of its own; yet one need not go to the other extreme and make those standards too rigid. I read the other day a criticism which laid down that no detective story should ever contain a clue which the reader did not know all about. This is pedantry. It would rule out, in the first place, all the Thorndyke stories, since Dr. Thorndyke, *ex hypothesi*, knows all about many things which are hidden from the majority of his public; and, in the second place, the reader must expect to have a little guessing to do. If he is shown the detective peering anxiously at an otherwise inoffensive button, to which his attention is thereby drawn, that is all he can claim as a matter of right. He is not entitled to be presented also with the shirt from which it came—though, as a matter of fact, many generous writers do frequently throw in the shirt as well.

He has a right, however, to complain when the author deliberately tells lies to him; and this very serious complaint must be made against Mrs. Agatha Christie's new book, *The Seven Dials Mystery* (Collins. 7s. 6d.). When the villain, being left all alone with the body of his victim, proceeds to bid it good cheer and farewell in the best public-school manner, that is a lie, of deliberate statement, on the author's part, that he is not the villain—for what villain would do such a thing with nobody looking on?—and as such it is definitely unfair. My own feeling, on finishing this rather feeble story, was that Mrs. Christie had not made up her mind until the last few chapters who the villain was to be, and that when this rather important point was settled, she was not energetic enough to go back and revise the earlier parts. Anyway, even apart from this serious flaw, the book is a disappointment; the characters are too exactly alike; there is practically no detecting; and Mrs. Christie ought to know that 'gangs', even gangs of virtuous persons engaged in unmasking other gangs, are not amusing. It is brightly written, of course—Mrs. Christie could not write dully if she tried—but it was hardly worth writing by a novelist of her class.

Mr. A. E. W. Mason is another writer whose technical equipment is so far superior to that of most of his colleagues as to carry him over a good many deficiencies of plot; and in *The Prisoner of the Opal* (Hodder & Stoughton. 7s. 6d.) he writes as well as ever. It may be a personal idiosyncrasy of mine, but I do not feel that this time he has hit on a good plot. Personally, I find black magic nearly as incredible as the subject of a novel, as gangs of Bolsheviks, and rather less pleasant. Also, I think his French detective's efforts at English idiom ought to be getting a little better—and perhaps a little less frequent?

—by now. But his book is well constructed; its atmosphere is excellently done, and the unnatural objects who surround the château adequately lifelike and horrible; and if the explanation does not disappoint you, you will find it an exciting book.

One piece of advice which should be given to all 'prentice hands is, 'Provide your criminal, if you are going to bring him on the stage, with a speaking part'. I do not know whether Miss Ianthe Jerrold, author of *The Studio Crime* (*Chapman & Hall. 7s. 6d.*), is a 'prentice hand or not—she has apparently written other novels, though this is the first mystery of hers that has reached my hands; but she has not thought to close that loophole. She has a mysterious murder, plenty of possible suspects, on all of whom suspicion is duly thrown, *and* one character who wanders about with no conceivable reason for existing. The hardened reader, therefore, having taken a couple of looks at this object, murmurs to himself: 'This is the murderer'—and is annoyed at being proved right. This is not, of course, one of the most serious criticisms of detective fiction; a novel must be pretty good before it is worth noticing a point like that, and Miss Jerrold has taken a good deal of trouble about her book. She has plenty of tangles, and plenty of detection; there is atmosphere about her crime and about the minor characters; and she writes well, if a trifle pretentiously. But, if she is going to continue as a mystery-monger, she must remember to camouflage the criminal.

Mrs. Belloc Lowndes is in some ways a curious writer. As a novelist of crime, her chosen path seems to be that of dramatizer to the Sunday Press; that is to say, her plots are either crimes which have actually taken place or inventions very nearly akin to fact. This gives her one

great advantage, in that her plots are always plausible, whereas the invented plot is too often starkly incredible, even as a puzzle. Of course, it means also that in her books, as in real life, there is comparatively little detection, for which reason the lover of nothing but puzzles finds her uninteresting. She has also, however, within the limits of her plots, an extraordinary insight into human character, and can describe, better than any one I know, the sort of men and women who do actually, at the present day, become involved in crime. This is particularly true of her women. Women are still the bugbears of the detective novelist; they are almost invariably either pieces of sugar or bumptious nuisances or unnatural horrors; and nobody except Mrs. Belloc Lowndes (or Mrs. Rickards, who shares many of her qualities) has convincingly described a woman criminal. For this reason I should recommend a trial of *One of These Ways* (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.), though it is not one of her best. The curious flavour of Mrs. Henry Wood about the writing and characterization almost make it into a period piece.

I took up Francis Beeding's *Pretty Sinister* (Hodder & Stoughton. 7s. 6d.) under the belief that it was a detective novel, which it is not. It is a shocker, about gangs of Russians, kidnappings, murder, and sudden death. Lively enough for those who like gangs of Russians, but without detective attractions. C. C. C.

*Accident* (Cassell. 7s. 6d.), is one of those books which, if they are not the vehicle of Mr. Arnold Bennett's creative method at its finest, do at least show him as the generous amateur of life, the vigorously fair-minded critic of his fellow-men, whose discrimination and cultivated voluptuousness his readers for its own sake have come to admire.

*The Pretty Lady*, a better novel than *Accident*, was another and excellent example of Mr. Bennett in this vein. And how he enjoys himself! The spectacle of life, which, in writers since the beginning of the world, has produced sensations of mingled repulsion and pitying tenderness, in Mr. Arnold Bennett is the source of entertainment sometimes almost excessive. Oh the plenitude of this modern world!—*trains-de-luxe*, restaurants, hotels, magazine-covers; even an accident is welcome, because it shakes up the human kaleidoscope and gives the familiar composition a new value and a new brightness. Still, one could wish that Mr. Bennett's hero and spokesman was capable of calling a porter, of catching sight of the *maître d'hôtel* in the restaurant-car, without the complementary reflection that he too (porter or *maître d'hôtel*) must have a wife and baby, must have known love, experienced jealousy and, in his time, no doubt, wept over the loss of a favourite dog. The main episode of Mr. Bennett's latest novel, the drama of his son and of his son's runaway wife, is considerably less vivid than a subsidiary episode, the relationship of an odd pair of travellers met on the train, Mr. and Mrs. Lucass, the hag-beauty and her martyred, adoring husband; hence the effect of the book is, as a whole, rather fragmentary. Yet, in its way, it is extraordinarily enjoyable. It has, of course, obvious faults, but, were they a thousand times more serious, it would none the less be worth reading.



# READER'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

## JEREMY TAYLOR

The text of Jeremy Taylor's writings is not difficult to get, for his complete works were reprinted several times during the first half of the nineteenth century, when he enjoyed almost as great a vogue as in his lifetime. But the early editions are very pleasant to possess, and though some, like *Holy Living*, are exceedingly rare in the first editions, none, as yet, is very expensive. They are mostly embellished with attractive engravings, and, as befitted so popular and so eminent a divine, are often to be found in beautiful contemporary morocco bindings. Four of his works were beautifully reprinted by Pickering.

### COMPLETE WORKS

*The Works . . . with a Life of the Author, and a Critical Examination of his Works*, by Reginald Heber. London. 1822. 15 vols.

Reprinted in 1828 and 1839. A corrected and revised edition, edited by the Rev. Charles Page Eden, was published in 1847-52, and reprinted in 1854.

### SELECTED WORKS

*Practical Works*. Bohn. 1850. 2 vols.

This contains most of the works which are worth reading, except *The Great Exemplar* and *Ductor Dubitantium*.

*Select Works, with Some Account of His Life*, by the Rev. T. S. Hughes. Valpy. 1831. 5 vols.

Other selections of his works were published in 1819, 1825, 1834, and 1841.

The following is a list of separate editions of Taylor's more important works.

*A Sermon preached on the Anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot. Oxford. 1638.*

But for a few passages which display germs of his future genius, this work has not much intrinsic value, apart from its interest as Taylor's earliest published work.

*Of the Sacred Order and Offices of Episcopacy. Oxford. 1642.*

Usually known as *Episcopacy Asserted*. Coleridge said, in reference to the preface of this book: 'The happiest *synthesis* of the divine, the scholar, and the gentleman was perhaps exhibited in him and Bishop Berkeley.'

*A Discourse of the Liberty of Prophesying. London. 1647.*

This book is the first important plea for religious toleration. It is also Taylor's first important work, and in it he begins to show his full power and beauty as a writer. Coleridge, while disapproving of some theological views expressed in it, said: '*The Liberty of Prophesying* is an admirable work, in many respects, and calculated to produce a much greater effect on the many than Milton's treatise on the same subject: on the other hand, Milton's is un-mixed truth. . . .'

*The Great Exemplar of Sanctity and Holy Life . . . Described in the Life and Death of the Ever Blessed Jesus Christ. London. 1649. 4to.*

A second edition, in folio, was published in 1653, with many engravings, by Faithorne. It was republished several times in the seventeenth century, and by Pickering in three volumes, in 1849.

This book is too long for most people to read through, but it is full of beautiful passages and discourses, and is described by Gosse as 'a noble and too-often-forgotten manual', and a 'Whole sequence of pearls hung on the narrative of the life of Christ on earth.'

*The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living.* London. 1650. 12mo.

*The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying.* London. 1651. 12mo.

These are in no sense two parts of the same book, but they very soon came to be published together. The twenty-eighth combined edition was printed in 1810-12, and Pickering issued editions in 1840, 1844, 1847, 1850, 1852 and 1853. They are published together in 'The Temple Classics'. *Holy Dying* shows Taylor almost continuously at his very best. It is the only 'sepulchral' book in English which cannot suffer by comparison with *Urn Burial*. Gosse describes it as illuminated by Taylor's genius 'in a limpid and continuous glory' and calls it 'one of the most beautiful prose compositions of the seventeenth century'. *Holy Living* has not such sustained merit, but it, too, has many of Taylor's finest passages.

*XXVIII Sermons Preached at Golden Grove.* London. 1651. Folio.

*XXV Sermons Preached at Golden Grove.* London, 1653. Folio.

These two volumes may be found separately, or bound together with a general title-page under the name of *Eniautos*, 1653. This volume was entirely written at the height of Taylor's power, and, being larger than *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*, contains more beautiful and unexcellable passages than any of his other works. A corrected edition appeared in 1655. Later editions were issued in 1668, 1673, 1678, 1817 (3 vols.), and 1841 (3 parts).

Taylor's sermons preached after the Restoration were collected in 1663 (4to), and, with two sermons added making nine in all, in 1667 (folio). These later sermons were added to the 1668 and subsequent editions.

Several of these sermons, in particular 'The Marriage Ring', were printed separately in the nineteenth century, under their picturesque original titles.

*The Real Presence and Spiritual of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament proved against the Doctrine of Transubstantiation.* London. 1654. 8vo.

Coleridge said of this book: 'Perhaps the most wonderful of all Taylor's works'. But he was praising theologically, and few modern

readers are likely to agree with him. It does, however, contain some noble passages, particularly the concluding paragraphs.

*The Golden Grove or a Manual of Daily Prayers . . . Also Festival Hymns.* London. 1655. 12mo.

There are some beautiful passages among the prayers, but this book is chiefly important in that it contains, with a few minor exceptions, the only poems which Taylor wrote. The book was popular, and was reprinted many times during the seventeenth century. Grosart, in 1870, issued a pamphlet of all Taylor's poems in the Fuller's Worthies Library. His poems are vastly inferior to his prose.

*Unum Necessarium: or the Doctrine and Practice of Repentance.* London. 1655. 8vo.

Coleridge, among many others, was shocked at the doubt which this book threw on the doctrine of original sin, and said that it contains 'dogmas subversive of the true Christian faith'. It involved Taylor in more troublesome controversy than anything else that he wrote. It does not contain much of interest to the general reader, but has at least one sustained passage in his very best manner.

*A Discourse of the Nature, Offices and Measures of Friendship.* London. 1657. 12mo.

Taylor's only secular work. It is equal in beauty to anything he wrote, and therefore to almost any piece of prose in English. The first edition is very rare, but the work may easily be obtained, either in *Polemical Discourses*, or in *Opuscula*, a small collection of shorter works first published in 1678, and several times reprinted.

*A Collection of Polemical and Moral Discourses.* London. 1657. Folio.

This is a very useful book, being a collection of the following works: *The Golden Grove*, *Episcopacy Asserted*, *The Real Presence*, *The Liberty of Prophesying* (with additions), *The Offices and Measures of Friendship*, *A Sermon on the Gunpowder Treason*, and some other shorter tracts. It was reprinted in 1674, 1679 and 1807 (in three volumes).

*The Worthy Communicant. London. 1660. 8vo.*

There is much that is beautiful in this book, but it shows a falling-off from his best work. With the exception of a few passages in his Irish sermons, Taylor's most magical days are over. In 1674, an edition was published, to which a funeral sermon was added, preached at the funeral of Sir George Dalstone, in 1657. Pickering published an edition in 1853.

*Ductor Dubitantium, or the Rule of Conscience. London. 1660. 2 vols., folio.*

This colossal work, on which Jeremy Taylor thought to base his claim to immortality, is almost an Everest in literature. But, like Everest, it has many *attainable* beauties and curious passages. Much of it was written during his most fruitful period in the early 1650's. Incredible as it may seem, it was reprinted three times in the seventeenth century, in 1671, 1676 and in 1696; also, abridged by Richard Barcroft, in 1725.

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## SELECTIONS

There are selected passages from Taylor in Basil Montague's *Selections from Taylor, Hooker, Hall, and Lord Bacon* (London. 1805, and reprinted several times by Pickering); in Mr. Pearsall Smith's *Treasury of English Prose* (Constable. 1919); and in *The Oxford Book of English Prose. The Beauties of Jeremy Taylor*, by B. S., was published in London in 1845, and in 1923 the Golden Cockerel Press published a *Selection*, edited by Mr. Martin Armstrong.

A selection edited by Mr. Pearsall Smith is in preparation, and will be published by the Clarendon Press.

## BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM

A manuscript autobiography of Jeremy Taylor is said to have existed once, and to have perished in the Customs House fire in London, in the early nineteenth century; but this is not certain, and if there ever was such a document it may still be in existence.

Anthony Wood gives a life of Taylor, unreliable in many respects, and there is a short account of him in Lloyd's *Memoirs of the Loyalists* (London. 1668). Amusing mention is made of him in Glanvil's *Sadducismus Triumphatus* (London. 1681), where he is recorded as having questioned a man who was troubled by a ghost. He also suggested some questions to be put to the ghost, but in vain, for 'it gave no answer, but crawled on its hands and feet over the wall again, and so vanisht in white, with a most melodious harmony'.

The following are the more important accounts of Jeremy Taylor.



### *Patience on a Platform*

‘Only another half-hour to go.’ ‘Might have been worse.’ \* \* \* ‘H’m?’  
 ‘We might both have run out of tobacco.’ \* \* \* ‘There’s always  
 a tobacco shop somewhere.’ ‘But suppose it didn’t keep Three  
 Nuns!’ \* \* \* ‘Oh, come, this isn’t such a benighted spot as all that!’

\* \* \*

## *The rest is silence—and* **THREE NUNS** the tobacco of curious cut—rs. 2d. an ounce

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 Issued by the Imperial Tobacco Co. (of Great Britain and Ireland), Ltd.

*A Funeral Sermon, Preached at the Obsequies of Jeremy, Lord Bishop of Down*, by Dr. George Rust. *London*. 1668. 4to.

The latter half of this sermon consists of a delightful and concise biographical account of Jeremy Taylor. It was reprinted in folio in 1668, 1673, and 1678, and is sometimes bound in at the end of the editions of *Emautos* of those dates. It was also printed in Heber's edition of the collected works.

*The Life of Bishop Taylor*, by John Wheeldon. *London*. 1793.

*The Life of Jeremy Taylor*, by H. K. Bonney, D.D. *London*. 1815.

Heber speaks of 'the accurate industry and zealous researches of Mr. Bonney'.

*The Life of Jeremy Taylor, with a Critical Examination of his Writings*, by Reginald Heber, D.D. *London*. 1824. 2 vols.

This was first published as part of the collected works. An edition edited by Eden was published in 1851, and reprinted in 1854. In spite of small faults and omissions remedied by later writers, Heber's remains the best and most thorough work on Jeremy Taylor.

*Bishop Jeremy Taylor, his Predecessors, Contemporaries, and Successors*, by R. A. Wilmott. *London*. 1847.

And admirable book, with accounts of other theological writers. A revised edition was published in 1848.

*Jeremy Taylor*, by Edmund Gosse. *Macmillan*. 1904. (English Men of Letters Series.)

A good book, with all the characteristic merits and faults of the author.

*The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Vol. III. *Pickering*. 1838.

This contains nearly two hundred pages of notes on Jeremy Taylor. They make interesting reading, but are, on the whole, theological rather than literary. They were reprinted in *Notes on English Divines*. Vol. I. *Pickering*. 1853.



# LIFE AND LETTERS

EDITED BY DESMOND MACCARTHY

ASSISTANT EDITOR: OLIVER BRETT

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immorality; in that of *Sleeveless Errand*, though every incident described was deterrent to sympathy, this was not regarded as excusing the realism of the 'talk' reported in it. In my own opinion it was a novel which every youth and girl tempted to join a tippling, promiscuous set such as the author describes, might well read with profit; I know several sensible parents who have borrowed it to lend it to their children.

The conclusion that many people have drawn from these two decisions is that the law should be altered. But, speaking as a layman, after reading the Act of 1857 and the leading case under it, namely *Regina v. Hicklin*, 1868, I am inclined to think that pending a better definition of obscenity—certainly needed—what is required and should be obtainable at once is a more accurate application of the actual law.

\* \* \* \*

All proceedings against books are taken under Lord Campbell's Act, 'for more effectually preventing the sale of obscene books, pictures, prints and other articles'. When introduced in 1857 this Act was regarded as a mere police measure. It roused little interest among men of letters; Disraeli, Macaulay and Bulwer Lytton, the leading men of letters in politics, were silent. Monckton-Milnes was, I think the only literary man who took part in the debates, and he supported it; the *Athenaeum* did not think it worth mentioning. Its prime object was the suppression of a trade in obscene books and pictures which flourished particularly in Holywell Street. Lord Campbell in his autobiography, notes that it was instantly successful there, and that this traffic was stopped; also that in Paris the police had begun in consequence to 'purify' the shops in the Palais Royal which catered for British tourists.

The vital clause in that Act runs as follows: 'If upon complaint there is any reason to believe that any obscene books, etc., are kept in any house or other place, for the purpose of sale or distribution, and upon proof that one or more such articles has been sold or distributed in connexion with such a place, justices may, upon being satisfied that such articles *are of such a character and description that the publication of them would be a misdemeanour and proper to be prosecuted as such*, order by special warrant that such articles shall be seized, and after summoning the occupier of the house, the same or other justices may, if they are satisfied that the articles seized are of the character stated in the warrant, and have been kept for the purpose aforesaid, order them to be destroyed.' The words I have italicized have an importance which has been overlooked. It is clear from them that it is *not* sufficient to prove that a book is 'obscene' (whatever the legal definition of that word may be) in order to justify its destruction. The magistrate must also be satisfied (*a*) that it is 'of such a character and description that the publication of it would be a misdemeanour'—that is to say, that its publisher could be convicted before a common jury for issuing an 'obscene libel'; and (*b*) that the book is 'proper to be prosecuted as such'. Condition (*a*) is a clear direction to the magistrate not to condemn a book because he is shocked by it himself, but to ask himself what conclusion a jury would probably reach after hearing all that could be urged in the publisher's defence. The meaning of condition (*b*) is brought out—and it is vitally important—by the comments of the judges in the case of *Regina v. Hicklin*; the case which also furnishes Chief Justice Cockburn's definition of obscenity, now applied by magistrates to all books brought before them,

namely, 'I think the test of obscenity is this, whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and in whose hands a publication of this sort may fall'.

Now, when a book has been shown to contain passages capable of corrupting minds capable of being corrupted, it is to-day taken for granted by magistrates that the book is condemned under Lord Campbell's Act. I speak as a layman, but the comments of Lord Blackburn and Mr. Justice Mellor, who were Chief Justice Cockburn's co-judges in this case, strongly suggest that this is *not* the proper interpretation of the law.

\* \* \* \*

The Chief Justice himself quoted the additional and necessary conditions, but it was Mr. Justice Blackburn (as he then was) and Mr. Justice Mellor whose comments explained their importance—Mr. Justice Lush acquiescing. What do the words 'proper to be prosecuted as such' mean? Lord Blackburn, who is regarded as one of the greatest English judges, after reading the section of the Act quoted above, said: 'I think with regard to the last clause, that the object of the legislation was to guard against the vexatious prosecutions of publishers of old and recognized standard works, in which there may be some obscene or mischievous matter. In the case of *Reg. v. Moxon* and in many of the instances cited by Mr. Kydd (Counsel for the defence in the *Hicklin* case), a book had been published which, in its nature, was such as to be called obscene or mischievous, and it might be held a misdemeanour to publish it; and on account of that an indictable offence. In *Moxon's* case the publication of *Queen Mab* was found by the jury to be an indictable

offence; I hope I may not be understood to agree with what the jury found, that the publication of *Queen Mab* was sufficient to make it an indictable offence. I believe, as everybody knows, that it was a prosecution instituted merely for the purpose of vexation and annoyance. So, whether the publication of the whole of the works of Dryden is or is not a misdemeanour, it would not be a case in which a prosecution would be "proper"; and I think the legislature put in that provision in order to prevent proceedings in such cases.' It is clear, then, that in Lord Blackburn's opinion the words 'proper to be prosecuted as such' are not a necessary presumption of law from the finding that the work in question contains 'obscene' matter, but a separate and essential condition, inserted to safeguard from prosecution works which would otherwise come under Lord Campbell's Act. They are, in fact, a provision for the protection of 'recognized standard works', i.e. works whose literary merit has been recognized. Mr. Justice Mellor's comment goes, I think, further, but to make its bearing clear it is necessary to say a few words about the actual case which was before the court at that time.

\* \* \* \*

In 1868, Henry Scott appealed against an order made by two justices under Lord Campbell's Act whereby a book entitled *The Confessional Unmasked* had been condemned to be destroyed. The argument for the defence was that the obscene matter contained in it (extracts from the works of certain theologians and on the practice of auricular confession) were justified as means to exposing evils, and that the book was a controversial one and written with the object of doing good. Mr. Justice Mellor's comment was as follows: 'I confess I have with

some difficulty, and with some hesitation, arrived very much at the conclusion at which my Lord and my learned Brothers have arrived. . . . The nature of the subject itself, if it may be discussed at all (and I think it undoubtedly may), is such that it cannot be discussed without to a certain extent producing authorities for the assertion that the confessional would be a mischievous thing to be introduced into this kingdom; *and therefore it appears to me very much a question of degree*, and if the matter were left to the jury it would depend very much on the opinion the jury might form of that *degree* in such a publication as the present. . . . It does appear to me that there is a great deal here for which there cannot be any necessity in any legitimate argument on the confessional and the like, and agreeing in that view, I certainly am not in a condition to dissent from my Lord and my Brother Blackburn, and I know my Brother Lush agrees entirely with their opinion. Therefore, with the expression of hesitation I have mentioned, I agree in the result at which they have arrived.'

\* \* \* \*

Now, if we put together the *obiter dicta* of these two eminent judges we arrive at an interpretation of Lord Campbell's Act which is, firstly, much more in harmony with the spirit of its preamble, 'whereas it is expedient to give additional powers of suppression of the trade of obscene books', and secondly, an interpretation which obviously does not carry due weight with magistrates to-day. Lord Blackburn says that the words 'proper to be prosecuted as such' were intended to exempt from prosecution, on the ground of containing mischievous or obscene matter, 'old and recognized standard works'; and Mr. Justice Mellor (also a judge of high repute) adds

the gloss that, in the case of other books, the question whether any obscene matter in them brings them under the Act *is one of degree*, the object with which such matter is introduced being taken into consideration in determining that degree.

It is not an uncommon belief among elderly men in whose lives literature plays a subordinate part, that only 'old' masterpieces are of any importance to mankind. Lord Blackburn, in interpreting the words 'proper to be prosecuted as such', as a provision deliberately inserted in the Act to protect literature, forgot for the moment that it is still possible to add to the world's store of 'standard works'; and, with all respect to so eminent a lawyer, those words he was interpreting afford no support for refusing to extend the same protection to all works of genuine literary value which do not aim at obviously pornographic effects. Mr. Justice Mellor, I think, saw this. At any rate, such a criticism is implied in his *obiter dictum* that the degree of obscenity permissible depends upon the nature of the work; a principle which is, by the bye, entirely destructive of Lord Cockburn's definition of indictable obscenity as anything which might corrupt any one. Yet how far these considerations are from influencing the magistracy to-day, I myself had proof when I, along with many literary men more distinguished than myself, attended as a would-be witness the *Well of Loneliness* case. Sir Chartres Biron then ruled that the question of literary merit was entirely beside the point. Mr. Birkett was not only not allowed to produce his witnesses, but he was not allowed to read the critical judgements upon the book which had appeared in the most reputable papers and journals. I could not help reflecting how much less fortunate he was than 'Biron for

the defence' in the case of *R. v. Thompson*, who secured the acquittal of Thompson for publishing the *Heptameron* by relying on the *dictum* of Lord Blackburn and by reading, without objection from the Court, extracts from the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and the *Edinburgh Review* to prove that the book in question had literary merit. Logically, in the case of a recent book, the equivalent of reading a critic's opinion from the pages of the *Encyclopedia* must be to read criticisms from reputable contemporary reviews. If Lord Blackburn's interpretation of the words 'proper to be prosecuted as such' is correct, and they were intended to protect works of 'recognized merit', there is no reason why contemporary recognition of merit should not entitle a book to protection.

\* \* \* \*

Lord Blackburn says that the Act contains a special provision for the protection of 'recognized standard works', and he instances those of Dryden; Mr. Justice Mellor that the question whether a passage is obscene or not is dependent upon the nature of the work in which it occurs. Lord Blackburn expressed disapproval of the prosecution of *Queen Mab*, apparently because by his time it had become a standard work and enjoyed the protection which the legislature had given to standard works. He regretted the prosecution was successful. But how can any book become a 'standard work', even should it deserve to become one, if it is destroyed before publication, and if those who order its destruction refuse to consider whether or not it possesses literary merit, or to hear evidence on the point?

I do not say that *Sleeveless Errand* would have been destined to become a classic, but it was clear to me—and after all I am something of an expert in such matters,



having spent my life in the study of literary methods—that the degree of obscenity in it was very slightly, if at all, in excess of what was necessary to effect the author's legitimate purpose, that of exposing the ugly, dismally dilapidated condition of a group of young people, who certainly exist, whose lives even have a sort of glamour for others who have not seen them close, and whose 'speech bewrayeth them'. That the purport of *Sleeveless Errand* was moral was not disputed, but ignored. It was condemned on the ground that it contained coarse expressions, and because much of the talk suggested in the speakers an ignoble and irresponsible attitude towards sex, society, and religion; that is to say, because the book infected the reader with precisely the kind of aversion from them which the author intended him to feel. It might very well have been defended successfully before a jury.

And what is the upshot? It is this: that if the Home Office, when they cause a warrant to be applied for, and the magistrates when they hear the case, would consider, what in Law they are bound to consider, not only whether the book in question is obscene, but also whether the publication of it would properly lead to the prosecution of the publisher, and if they would give full weight to the *dicta* of the eminent judges who have interpreted Lord Campbell's Act, we might then keep that Act as the salutary check it was intended to be upon traffic in pornography. It might be kept without any damage to literature, or without interfering with that perpetual pooling of knowledge and experience on which civilization depends. But if they do not do this, then the law will inevitably fall into complete disrepute with reasonable people, and how bad that is for the moral sense of a community everyone with an inkling of statesmanship knows.

E. M. FORSTER

## A CAMERA MAN

'I would like to see Gopher Prairie,' says the heroine of Mr. Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, and her husband promptly replies: 'Trust me. Here she is. Brought some snapshots down to show you.' That, in substance, is what Mr. Lewis has done himself. He has brought down some snapshots to show us and posterity. The collection is as vivid and stimulating as any writer who adopts this particular method can offer. Let us examine it; let us consider the method in general. And let us at once dismiss the notion that any fool can use a camera. Photography is a great gift, whether or no we rank it as an art. If we have not been to Gopher Prairie we cry: 'So that's it!' on seeing the snap. If we have been we either cry: 'How like it!' or 'How perfectly disgraceful, not the least like it!' and in all three cases our vehemence shows that we are in the presence of something alive.

I have never been to Gopher Prairie, Nautilus, Zenith, or any of their big brothers and sisters, and my exclamations throughout are those of a non-American, and worthless as a comment on the facts. Nevertheless, I persist in exclaiming, for what Mr. Lewis has done for myself and thousands of others is to lodge a piece of a continent in our imagination. America, for many of us, used to mean a very large apron, covered with a pattern of lozenges, edged by a frill, and chastely suspended by a boundary tape round the ample waist of Canada. The frill, like the tape, we visualized slightly; on the New York side it puckered up into sky-scrapers, on the farther side it was a blend of cinemas and cow-boys, and more or less down

the middle of the preposterous garment we discerned a pleat associated with the humour of Mark Twain. But the apron proper, the lozenges of pale pink and pale green—they meant nothing at all: they were only something through which railways went and dividends occasionally came from, and which had been arbitrarily spattered with familiar names, like a lunar landscape. As we murmured ‘Syracuse, Cairo, London even, Macon, Memphis, Rochester, Plymouth’, the titles, so charged with meaning in their old settings, cancelled each other out in their new, and helped to make the apron more unreal. And then Sinclair Lewis strode along, developed his films, and stopped our hawering. The lozenges lived. We saw that they were composed of mud, dust, grass, crops, shops, clubs, hotels, railway stations, churches, universities, etc., which were sufficiently like their familiar counterparts to be real, and sufficiently unlike them to be extremely exciting. We saw men and women who were not quite ourselves, but ourselves modified by new surroundings, and we heard them talk a language which we could usually, but not always, understand. We enjoyed at once the thrills of intimacy and discovery, and for that and much else we are grateful, and posterity will echo our gratitude. Whether he has ‘got’ the Middle West, only the Middle West can say, but he has made thousands of people all over the globe alive to its existence, and anxious for further news. Ought a statue of him, camera in hand, to be erected in every little town? This, again, is a question for the Middle West.

Let us watch the camera at work:

In the flesh, Mrs. Opal Emerson Mudge fell somewhat short of a prophetic aspect. She was pony-built

and plump, with the face of a haughty Pekinese, a button of a nose, and arms so short that, despite her most indignant endeavours, she could not clasp her hands in front of her as she sat on the platform waiting.

Angus Duer came by, disdainful as a greyhound, and pushing on white gloves (which are the whitest and the most superciliously white objects on earth). . . .

At the counter of the Greek Confectionery Parlour, while they (i.e. the local youths) ate dreadful messes of decayed bananas, acid cherries, whipped cream, and gelatinous ice cream, they screamed to one another: 'Hey, lemme 'lone', 'Quit dog-gone you, looka what you went and done, you almost spilled my glass swater', 'Like hell I did', 'Hey, gol darn your hide, don't you go sticking your coffin-nail in my i-scream'.

She saw that his hands were not in keeping with a Hellenic face. They were thick, roughened with needle and hot iron and plough handle. Even in the shop he persisted in his finery. He wore a silk shirt, a topaz scarf, thin tan shoes.

The drain pipe was dripping, a dulcet and lively song: drippety-drip-drip-dribble; drippety-drip-drip-drip.

The method throughout is the photographic. Click, and the picture's ours. A less spontaneous or more fastidious writer would have tinkered at all of the above extracts, and ruined everything. The freshness and vigour would have gone, and nothing been put in their places. For all his knowingness about life, and commercially-travelled airs, Mr. Lewis is a novelist of the instinctive sort, he goes

to his point direct. There is detachment, but not of the panoramic type: we are never lifted above the lozenges, Thomas Hardy fashion, to see the townlets seething beneath, never even given as wide a view as Arnold Bennett accords us of his Five Towns. It is rather the detachment of the close observer, of the man who stands half a dozen yards off his subject, or at any rate within easy speaking distance of it, and the absence of superiority and swank (which so pleasantly characterizes the books) is connected with this. Always in the same house or street as his characters, eating their foodstuffs, breathing their air, Mr. Lewis claims no special advantages; though frequently annoyed with them, he is never contemptuous, and though he can be ironic and even denunciatory, he has nothing of the aseptic awfulness of the seer. Neither for good nor evil is he lifted above his theme; he is neither a poet nor a preacher, but a fellow with a camera a few yards away.

Even a fellow with a camera has his favourite subjects, as we can see by looking through the Kodak-albums of our friends. One amateur prefers the family group, another bathing-scenes, another his own house taken from every possible point of view, another cows upon an alp, or kittens held upside down in the arms of a black-faced child. This tendency to choose one subject rather than another indicates the photographer's temperament. Nevertheless, his passion is for photography rather than for selection, a kitten will serve when no cows are present, and, if I interpret Mr. Lewis correctly, we must not lay too much stress on his attitude to life. He has an attitude; he is against dullness, heartiness and intolerance, a trinity of evils most closely entwined; he mistrusts Y.M.C.A. helpfulness and rotarian idealism; while as for a positive

creed (if we can accept *Martin Arrowsmith* as an unaided confession of faith) he believes in scientific research. 'So many men, Martin, have been kind and helpful, so few have added to knowledge,' complains the old bacteriologist. One can safely class him with writers termed 'advanced', with people who prefer truth to comfort, passion to stability, prevention to cure. But the classification lets what is most vital in him escape; his attitude, though it exists, does not dwell in the depths of his being. His likes and dislikes mean less to him than the quickness of his eye, and though he tends to snapshot muscular Christians when they are attacked with cramp, he would sooner snap them amid clouds of angels than not at all. His commentary on society is constant, coherent, sincere; yet the reader's eye follows the author's eye rather than his voice, and when Main Street is quitted it is not its narrowness, but its existence that remains as a permanent possession.

His method of book-building is unaffected and appropriate. In a sense (a very faint sense) his novels are tales of unrest. He takes a character who is not quite at ease in his or her surroundings, contrives episodes that urge this way or that, and a final issue of revolt or acquiescence. In his earlier work both character and episodes are clear-cut; in his later—but let us postpone for a moment the painful problem of a photographer's old age. Carrol Endicott, the heroine of his first important book, is a perfect medium, and also a living being. Her walks down Main Street are overwhelming; we see the houses, we see her against them, and when the dinginess breaks and Erik Valborg arises with his gallant clothes and poet's face, we, too, are seduced, and feel that such a world might well be lost for love. Never again is Mr. Lewis to

be so poignant or to arrange his simple impressions so nearly in the order of high tragedy; 'I may not have fought the good fight, but I have kept the faith' are Carrol's final words, and how completely are they justified by all she has suffered and done! Babbitt follows her—of grosser clay, and a native while she was an exile, but even Babbitt sees that there is something better in life than graft and goodfellowship, though he acquiesces in them at the close. Martin Arrowsmith succeeds where Carrol and Babbitt failed, because he is built strongly and prepared to sacrifice a home, but, regarded as a medium, he is identical with them, he can register their doubts and difficulties. And the same is true of Elmer Gantry; his heavy feet are turned to acquiescence from the first, but he, too, has moments of uneasiness, and hypocrisy; religious eroticism and superstition can be focussed through him. And so with Samuel Dodsworth in this last book. (*Dodsworth. Jonathan Cape. 7s. 6d.*) He reacts this way and that among the main streets of Europe, and many pictures of them can be taken before he decides that they will not do.

Now, in the earlier books this method was a complete success, but with *Elmer Gantry* doubts begin; the theme is interesting, but the snapshots less remarkable. And in *Dodsworth* doubt becomes dismay. Dodsworth is a decent citizen of Zenith who retires early and goes to Europe with his wife. She is cultivated and snobby—a *rechauffée* of the second Mrs. Arrowsmith, but served upon an enormous dish. She talks, talks, flirts, patronizes, talks, and he, humble and observant, gradually realizes her inadequacies, but all the time he talks, talks, talks. The talk is rhetoric, the slang tired, the pictures blurred. The English country church, palace at Venice, restaurant

at Paris, journey in an aeroplane, Bernese Oberland, back in New York, the right sort of American tourist, the wrong sort, is there a right sort, is it wrong to think there is a right sort? . . . on the story trundles, unprofitably broad-minded and with unlucky thematic parallels to Henry James. The method remains, but something has died. The following quotation will show us what:

He found that in certain French bathrooms one can have hot water without waiting for a geyser. He found that he needn't have brought two dozen tubes of his favourite (and very smelly) toothpaste from America—one actually could buy toothpaste, corn-plaster, New York Sunday papers, Bromo-Seltzer, Lucky Strikes, safety razor blades, and ice cream almost as easily in Paris as in the United States; and a man he met in Luigi's bar insisted that if one requested earnestly enough he could find B.D.V.'s.

What has happened? What has changed the Greek Confectionery Parlour at Gopher Prairie, where every decaying banana mattered, to this spiritless general catalogue? The explanation is all too plain: photography is a pursuit for the young. So long as a writer has the freshness of youth on him, he can work the snapshot method, but when it passes he has nothing to fall back upon. It is here that he differs from the artist. The artist has the power of retaining and digesting experiences, which, years later, he may bring forth in a different form; to the end of life he is accompanied by a secret store.

The artist may not be good. He may be very bad. He generally is. And it is not to celebrate him and to decry the photographer that I draw this distinction between them. But it does explain, I think, why quick spontaneous



writers (the kind that give me more pleasure than any) are apt, when they lose their spontaneity, to have nothing left, and to be condemned by critics as superficial. They are not superficial, they are merely not artistic; they are members of a different profession, the photographic, and the historian of our future will cease to worry over this, will pick up the earlier and brighter volumes in which their genius is enshrined, and will find there not only that genius, but a record of our age.

Mr. Lewis is not our sole photographer. There is always Mr. H. G. Wells. They have just the same gift of hitting off a person or place in a few quick words; moreover, they share the same indifference to poetry, and pass much the same judgements on conduct. Consequently, one might have expected that their literary careers would be similar, that the authors of *Love and Mr. Lewisham* and *Main Street* would develop in the same way and at the same rate. They have diverged, and for an instructive reason. Wells is still kicking because photography was only one of his resources. When his early freshness wore off, he could bring into play his restless curiosity about the universe, and thus galvanize his later novels into life. In Mr. Lewis, curiosity about the universe has never been very strong. Only occasionally has he thought of the past, the future, international relationships, science, labour, the salvation or damnation of the globe. The people in the room and the houses across the street are what really interest him, and when the power to reproduce them sharply fails, he has nothing to do except to reproduce them dimly. If this view of his development is correct, the later stages of it are bound to be disappointing. However, there the early books are, done, safe, mankind's for ever; also, the longer one lives, the less important does 'development' appear.

F. L. LUCAS

## THYRSIS

We read most poets' lives that we may the better understand their poetry; but there are also poets whose poetry we may read for the better understanding of their lives. For a writer may be more interesting than his work (though certainly the opposite is more often true), and its value lie above all in its revelation of him. Poetry in particular offers a conventional disguise under cover of which, however transparent, the shyest souls have sometimes ventured into the market-place, as naked as Hans Andersen's Emperor in his magic mantle. For poetry, too, is a magic mantle, with the power of so bewitching its wearer that he may have not a single confidant—except all mankind.

And yet there is not really any miracle in this. The poet has possessed a sacred tradition of freedom ever since the days when he was thought of as literally inspired, a musical mouthpiece for the lips of God. And he has acquired in addition a golden bridge of escape. 'We know how to tell fictions resembling truth, and to tell pure truth as well', said the Muses to Hesiod on Helicon in the dawn of European poetry; there is no hard line between the two, and a poem slips to and fro between fact and fancy like a pea between its thimbles. Accordingly the poet who has just unlocked his heart can always pretend in his fits of reticence that it was not his own heart after all, merely an imaginary one. He can be as free with his own character as a modern novelist with his friends'; as reserved, and yet as self-revealing, as Tennyson or Hous-

man. In poetry self-confession is traditional: and in poetry it is safe. So that the lines of Horace on the lost Lucilius keep their truth of many another poet's work as well:

All the man's life stands there revealed, as though  
It hung graved on a tablet in a shrine.

These dead singers lie century after century before the curious eyes of posterity, like Alexander the Great, embalmed in honey—the honey of their own gathering. And so it may happen that if a poet has an interesting personality, and is honest about himself, his work may acquire an enduring charm beyond its purely literary worth, as a story we hear told may be transfigured for us by our interest in its teller's character.

Such a case is Clough's. His poetry is seldom very good; but he is extraordinarily interesting both as an individual and as a type of his time; and certainly no man ever struggled more agonizingly to be honest with and about himself.

He was born on New Year's Day, 1819, of a family connected with John Calvin (there is something both appropriate and ironic in that) and with a Hugh Clough, who was a friend of Cowper and a Fellow of King's, in the chapel of which he lies buried. The poet's mother was a devout, clinging woman with an admiration for stoic courage which led her to regale the little Cloughs with stories of martyrdoms, from Leonidas to Latimer. It is not surprising that Arthur, her favourite, grew into a serious child, too prim to take off his shoes and stockings on the beach, and given to choosing for himself, in games of 'Swiss Family Robinson', the part of Ernest. From 1829 to 1837 he was at Rugby under Arnold, where he appears

to have provided a part-model, together with the future Dean Stanley, for the Arthur of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. It is clear that he was overstrained there, both mentally and morally: of the second his own letters are proof enough. He writes, aged seventeen: 'I verily believe my whole being is soaked through with the wishing and hoping and striving to do the school good, or rather to keep it up and hinder it from falling in this, I do think, very critical time, so that all my cares and affections and conversations, thoughts, words and deeds, look to that involuntarily.' And again, nine months later: 'we are all getting on very pleasantly this half-year, and the school looks remarkably harmless, and everybody inclined to do their best and behave well; which is very delicious'. From these delights Clough passed in the next year to Oxford; where this severe young scholar might be found plunging in the wintry Cherwell, or working in a fireless room at Balliol, whence the hardiest visitors fled after a few minutes' exposure. Which is precisely what they were meant to do. But fireless as his rooms might be, Clough was, in his own phrase, drawn 'like straw up the draught of a chimney' by a conflagration of another sort—the Oxford Movement. For the influence of Arnold was now succeeded in him by the influence of Newman, as Newman's was in its turn to be replaced by Carlyle's. For the present Clough emerged with his faith bewildered and his career endangered: instead of a first, which all who knew him had taken for granted, he gained only a second; his father failed in business; he himself failed for a fellowship at Balliol. In the next year, however, 1842, he was elected at Oriel and it was open to him to settle down into the placid, backwater-lily existence of a don. Arnold, his first leader, died this year: his second, Newman, passed over

in 1845 to Rome. But Clough had now found his vocation: he had begun to doubt. New winds of the spirit blew him out of his harbour—the boisterous breath of Carlyle, whirling ‘Hebrew old clothes’ like withered leaves before it; and the calmer influence of Emerson. In 1848, year of revolutions, Clough’s religious scepticism had reached a point that made his position at Oriel impossible: he resigned tutorship and fellowship. But the world which now awaited from him a religious apologia stating his position, was somewhat disconcerted to be presented instead with a light-hearted pastoral in mocking hexameters, all about a vacation reading-party of undergraduates—‘The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich.’ Oxford read it with headshaking and judged it (of all things!) ‘indecent and profane’, ‘immoral and communistic’.

The next year, 1849, found Clough at Rome; not as a convert, but as a sympathetic, yet half-cynical spectator of that forlorn defence of the Roman Republic by Garibaldi and Mazzini, which is so vividly painted in Trevelyan’s prose and the verse of Clough’s own ‘Amours de Voyage’.

The rest of his life is less significant—an unhappy, lonely period as head of University Hall in London; a brief migration to Cambridge, U.S.A.; seven quiet and contented years of marriage, with a post in the Education Office; then in 1860–1 a breakdown, a hurried flight abroad, and a resting-place for ever in the Protestant cemetery of Florence, where five months before him Elizabeth Barrett Browning had been laid. Clough was no peer of the two English poets who sleep in the sister-cemetery at Rome; but not even ‘Adonais’ had a nobler dirge than the death of ‘Thyrsis’ drew from the son of

that Arnold under whom had begun his troubled experience of life.

But Clough, just as he is finer than most of his poetry, is more interesting than most of his life. He had, one may say, two ruling passions—one, for going his own way and thinking his own thoughts; the other for going, and for thinking, straight. The moral conscientiousness of the model pupil of Arnold is of no great interest: young prigs, never rare, were particularly plentiful then. But the intense intellectual conscientiousness into which it grew is a far rarer quality: it remains one of the central things in the worth of Clough's poetry and in the unhappiness of his life.

It was, indeed, this unrelenting critical honesty of mind that rescued him from the effects of a system of education about which he later retained no illusions. Seventy years before Mr. Strachey, whom some have thought so unfair, Arnold's own pupil criticized no less incisively, through the mouth of the Uncle in 'Dipsychus', Arnold's treatment of schoolboys as miserable little sinners with souls to be saved: 'They're all so pious . . . they seem to me a sort of hobbadi-hoy cherub, too big to be innocent, and too simple for anything else. They're full of the notion of the world being so wicked, and of their taking a higher line as they call it. I only fear they'll never take any line at all. . . . Why didn't he flog them and hold his tongue? Flog them he did, but why preach?' From this Rugbeian elephantiasis of the conscience Clough recovered; but he seems himself to have doubted whether he recovered completely. One cannot be too careful about teasing fiction into autobiography; but the hero of 'Dipsychus' is certainly in part a self-portrait:

He was a sort of moral prig, I've heard,  
Till he was twenty-five: and even then  
He never entered into life as most men.  
That is the reason why he fails so soon.

Similarly, in 'Mari Magno':

He now, o'ertasked at school, a serious boy,  
A sort of after-boyhood to enjoy  
Appeared. . . .  
With all his eager notions still there went  
A self-correcting and ascetic bent,  
That from the obvious good still led astray,  
And set him travelling on the longest way.

Whatever this may be as poetry, as psychology it rings true enough. How much of Clough's final character came to him from birth, how much from Rugby, only a modern biographer would be rash enough to estimate. Certainly Clough believed in an inherited lack of vitality. 'Take care', he writes to his brother, 'you never say "It's too much trouble"—"I can't be bothered", which are tolerably old favourites of yours, and, indeed, of all who have any Perfect blood in them.' (Perfect was his mother's maiden name.) The peculiar misfortune was that one by nature so scrupulous and doubtful should have been thrown by destiny first into the most over-scrupulous of schools, and then into a society hag-ridden by religious doubt. This child of Diffidence was bred up by Too-good, then sent to live in Doubting Castle. Poor relations of Hamlet are tediously numerous; but Clough was no ignoble member of that family. He too lacked, not will, but eyelids—the power to stop looking and shut his eyes and leap. And he too found his malady completed by his

own awareness of it, by the self-knowledge that he was born

To finger idly some old Gordian knot,  
Unskilled to sunder and too weak to cleave.

Sceptics should take care to inherit a sanguine temperament. Clough lacked the wise frivolity of Lucian or Montaigne or Voltaire—‘I do not greatly think about Montaigne.’ Not for him the feather-pate of folly that bears the falling sky, or the animal spirits that enable happier men to be as foolish as a foolish world requires. In the words of ‘Thyrsis’:

Some life of men unblest  
He knew, which made him droop and filled his head.  
He went: his piping took a troubled sound  
Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;  
He could not wait their passing, he is dead.

It was not only religious uncertainty that tormented him. Even in love, where few men find any difficulty in being foolish enough, his intellectual conscience pursues him with doubts whether his passion is not (characteristic word) ‘factitious’. The real Clough did in the end get happily married (how much by his own doing we do not know); but the hero of ‘Amours de Voyage’, one of his many self-portraits, ends more deeply lost than ever in the doubt that stands inscribed on its title-page—‘Il doutait de tout, même de l’amour’. The ‘factitious’ pursues him as the Furies Orestes. Love, to meet his demands, has to be far too true ever to run smooth:



I tremble for something factitious,  
Some malpractice of heart, some illegitimate process.  
We are so prone to these things with our terrible notions  
of duty.

He feels something: but what?

Well, I know after all it is only juxtaposition.  
Juxtaposition in short: and what is juxtaposition?

What, indeed? He might have found an answer in a  
poetess he knew, the first of poetesses, in that quivering  
poem which begins:

God is not more blessèd than is the lover  
Sitting, looking into thy face before him.

But it would have been no use. The unhappy ending is a  
foregone conclusion.

After all perhaps there was something factitious about  
it;  
I have had pain, it is true: I have wept, and so have the  
actors.

As with love, so with politics. Clough is that 'Republican Friend' to whom Arnold addressed his sonnets of 1848. But in the republican Rome of 1849 Clough was not one of the geese who might perhaps save the Capitol. He sympathized; he understood; indeed, he understood too well.

Victory! Victory! Victory!—Ah, but it is, believe me,  
Easier, easier far, to intone the chant of the martyr  
Than to indite any paean of any victory. Death may  
Sometimes be noble; but life, at the best, will appear  
an illusion. . . .

The smoke of the sacrifice rises to heaven  
Of a sweet savour, no doubt, to Somebody, but on the  
altar,  
Lo, there is nothing remaining but ashes and dirt and  
ill odour.

Some of us may, perhaps, find that odour not unfamiliar,  
remembering 1919: and, seeing Mussolini stand where  
stood Mazzini, may wonder if Clough was, after all, so  
wrong as our fathers must have thought.

Whither depart the souls of the brave that die in the  
battle,  
Die in the lost, lost fight for the cause that perishes with  
them;  
Are they upborne from the field on the slumberous  
pinions of angels  
Unto a far-off home where the weary rest from their  
labour,  
And the deep wounds are healed, and the bitter and  
burning moisture  
Wiped from the generous eyes? Or do they linger,  
unhappy,  
Pining and haunting the grave of their bygone hope  
and endeavour?  
All declamation, alas. . . !  
Whither depart the brave?—God knows; I certainly  
do not.

‘He that looks too long into the abyss’, said Nietzsche,  
‘in the end the abyss shall look into him.’ But that, through  
life, was the one thing Clough never hesitated to do, long  
and steadily, come what might. Honesty, coupled with a  
sense of humour which first appears in his mature writing,

like a sun first seen at noon on a grey day, is what ennobled the vision of life which he expressed so often in verse and sometimes in poetry. Like Samuel Butler, he too pursued 'the understanding that surpasses any peace'; like Bishop Butler, he also passionately felt—'Things are what they are and the consequences of them will be what they will be; why then should we wish to be deceived?' In his own homely phrase:

But play no tricks upon thy soul, O man,  
Let fact be fact, and life the thing it can.

Or again, in one of his finer flashes:

It fortifies my soul to know  
That, though I perish, truth is so.

Or yet once more, in a typical letter: 'I think I must have been getting into a little mysticism lately. It won't do: twice two are four, all the world over, and there's no harm in its being so; 'tish't the devil's doing that it is; *il faut s'y soumettre*, and all right.' No wonder he loved the eighteenth century and thought it a good training for a poet to copy out some Goldsmith every day; no wonder pupils of his remembered how at some wild opinion in their essays he would only say in his quiet searching way: 'Ah then, you think so?'

The result of too much good sense is disillusion: the sugar for disillusion is irony. It is a bitter sweetening; but it serves. Eighteenth-century France can illustrate that. And Clough, though he could never be epicureanly gay, developed a pleasantly ironic humour; genial in the 'Bothie', more flippantly bitter in 'Amours de Voyage',

bitterer still in 'Dipsychus', but most pointed of all perhaps in 'The Latest Decalogue' with that admirable climax of sneering feminine rhymes:

Thou shalt not covet: but tradition  
Approves all forms of competition.

But Clough can never play Mephistopheles for long; there is too much of Margaret in him, too much of that wistfulness which finds its utterance in the three poems of his that all the world knows—'Peschiera', 'Qua Cursum Ventus', and 'Say not the struggle naught availeth'.

It is, then, as a human document rather than as literature that much of Clough's work can be enjoyed to-day—as the utterance of a mind preserved from softness by its wit, from ineffectiveness by its courage and good sense. Technically, Clough's verse can at times be atrocious:

Had miscellaneous experience had  
Of human acts, good half, and half of bad.

But he is sometimes lovely, seldom dull, never false. Thus 'The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich', if read, as it should be read, for nothing more serious than amusement, has a way of startling one every now and then with glimpses of sudden beauty or with sudden depths:

Perfect as picture, as vision entrancing that comes to  
the sightless  
Through the great granite jambs, the stream, the glen,  
and the mountain.

The next instant, like his mountain-stream, his hurrying hexameters will tumble laughing down bathos after bathos; then foam out again into some transient loveli-

ness, or run deep and still for a stretch of quiet reflection. For even here in the wilderness, though less harshly, echo the cryings of Carlyle and the questionings of 1848: even here is debated that eternal problem of the price of civilization in terms of human misery. For the Socialistic young hero, destined to marry a Highland lass in the end, is momentarily bewitched by a girl of the upper class.

Often I find myself saying and know not myself as I  
say it,

What of the poor and the weary? Their labour and pain  
is needed.

Perish the poor and the weary! What can they better  
than perish?

Perish in labour for her, who is worth the destruction  
of empires?

What! for a mite, for a mote, an impalpable odour of  
honour,

Armies shall bleed; cities burn; and the soldier red  
from the storming

Carry hot rancour and lust into chambers of mothers  
and daughters. . . .

Yea—and shall hodmen in beer-shops complain of a  
glory denied them,

Which could not ever be theirs more than now it is  
theirs as spectators?

Which could not be in all earth, if it were not for labour  
of hodmen?

And I find myself saying, and what I am saying discern  
not,

Dig in thy deep dark prison, O miner! and finding be  
thankful;

Though unpolished by thee, by thee unseen in perfection,  
While thou art eating black bread in the poisonous air  
of thy cavern,  
Far away glitters the gem on the peerless neck of a  
Princess.  
Dig, and starve, and be thankful; it is so and thou hast  
been aiding.

Clough put a good deal into this poem; for, indeed, it contained a good deal of himself. He had taken a reading-party to Glen Urquhart the year before; several of the characters are portraits; even the hero's romance with a Highland girl recalls the lyric ὁ Θεὸς μετὰ σοῦ in a way which suggests that a real experience lay behind.

But I suppose 'The Bothie' finds few readers: and 'Amours de Voyage' even fewer, though it seems to me better still. The idea of a novel in hexameter letters hardly stirs the blood; yet I feel Clough's hexameters to be the only successful specimens of their kind in English. For English hexameters cannot be taken seriously. That is exactly why they suit so well the half-mocking tone of these two poems; and just because their tone is so largely burlesque, when it does at moments become serious, the contrast is strong enough to make us for a moment take them seriously too. This contrast runs all through the action of 'Amours de Voyage'—the abortive English love affair of a 'too quick despairer', seen against the background of the vain heroism of the doomed Roman Republic. It is a slight, amusingly told story, made to serve as a thread for Clough's reflections on life, which form the real heart of the poem up to its stoical conclusion:

Shall we come out of it all, some day, as one does from a tunnel?

Will it be all at once, without our doing or asking,  
We shall behold clear day, the trees and meadows  
about us,

And the faces of friends, and the eyes we loved looking  
at us?

Who knows? Who can say? It will not do to suppose  
it. . . .

Not as the Scripture says, is, I think, the fact. Ere our  
death-day,

Faith, I think, does pass, and Love, but Knowledge  
abideth,

Let us seek Knowledge;—the rest may come and go as  
it happens,

Knowledge is hard to seek, and harder yet to adhere to  
Knowledge is painful often; and yet when we know we  
are happy.

Seek it, and leave mere Faith and Love to come with  
the chances.

As for Hope—to-morrow I hope to be starting for  
Naples.

So under the Roman Empire, Virgil's scholiast likewise concluded, 'All things grow a weariness, except to understand'—'*omnia lassant praeter intellegere*': so under the Third Republic Proust, too, turned away from the world—to understand. Is it wise? Is it wise enough? That is another question. But I have an affection for '*Amours de Voyage*'. It is not the sort of work to appeal to either the popinjays or the pedants in modern criticism. It is too human. So much the better. One may like a poet to wear

other than daisy-chains, even though at times he clanks and stumbles in them. Pure Beauty left too long alone is always liable to be found fondling hairy ears, in a union of null perfection and perfect nullity.

The two other long poems published after Clough's death are both unfinished and both inferior. 'Dipsychus', 'the Doubled-souled', an adaptation of the idea of *Faust*, with a characteristic twist leaves it in doubt whether Mephistopheles is really a devil, or the Spirit of Good Sense. But though there are moments when Clough's irony rings home, as in the passage where Mephistopheles insists that the hero shall take holy orders, the poem as a whole goes too much in dressing-gown and slippers. Similarly, 'Mari Magno', with its remote mixture of Chaucer and Crabbe, is but a barren ocean to plough: yet there remain fine things, now widely forgotten, in the shorter poems—among them that fragment 'The Shadow', with an opening dignity such as Clough never equalled elsewhere:

I dreamed a dream: I dreamt that I espied,  
Upon a stone that was not rolled aside,  
A Shadow sit upon a grave—a Shade  
As thin, as unsubstantial, as of old  
Came, the Greek poet told,  
To lick the life-blood in the trench Ulysses made—

Then once more the serious features relax into the old ironic smile, the agonized flippancy of Hamlet; for the risen Jesus cannot explain Himself; the priests alone show not a shadow of uncertainty.

As for the Shade, who trusted such narration?  
Except, of course, in ancient revelation.



Clough, indeed, ends by becoming a sort of Mithridates, subsisting on the poison of doubt itself.

To-day, as we look back, he seems the poet of a promise unfulfilled—of a promise cut short, not like that of Keats by death, but by lack of vitality. His later work steadily weakens; and there is little reason to suppose that longer life would have meant for him longer memory. At times he seems made to fit his friend's phrase of Shelley—'an ineffectual angel'—and yet Clough was of sturdier stuff than that implies. His was less the faint heart that wins no fair lady, than the eternal doubt which lady was indeed fair. It was no mere 'angel' that impressed the critical Matthew Arnold with the sense that there had never been 'purer or more subtle soul', and left his mark even on the rough granite of Carlyle's mind. For us he remains the impersonation of an age when religious doubt was not, as now, a rare and mild green-sickness, but a crippling, even a fatal malady. We are not cleverer; we are harder, disillusioned, indifferent. The age of crusades is over and the age of cocktails flourishes, a little wormwoody, in its stead. But a crusade was what Clough longed for:

We ask action  
And dream of arms and conflict; and string up  
All self-devotion's muscles; and are set  
To fold up papers.

The Crimean War came: but it set Clough to string up, not 'self-devotion's muscles', but (as Mr. Strachey's readers will remember) the brown-paper parcels of Miss Florence Nightingale. Perhaps the truth is that he took life too seriously, art not seriously enough. The air of the amateur clings about him: he could not, like happier artists, forget the whole globe over a cherry-stone. He

seems at times a half-hewn Matthew Arnold, left lying in the quarry. He *is* Hamlet, Hamlet with a touch of Polonius—not Shakespeare. ‘Laugh, my young friends,’ says Nietzsche again, ‘if you are at all determined to remain pessimists.’ That, for all his ironic smiles, Clough usually had too heavy a heart to do. Who shall blame him? This world is not a farce of such high merit that those cannot be forgiven who are not amused. Clough cared about intellectual honesty when that commodity was less cheap than now: and those who care for it still, will respect his memory. We laugh a great deal at the Victorians. There is nothing against that, provided we do the same for ourselves; provided also that it does not prevent our trying to understand them. For those who go to understand, will often stay to like and to admire.

NUGENT BARKER

## MRS. SAYCE'S GUY

The November wind had sobbed all night over Hannibal Terrace as though its heart were breaking. But dawn put an end to the monotonous sound, smiling at first, a little wanly, into those squalid windows, and eventually packing the narrow street with mist, and roofing the mist with a sulphur-coloured sky. Later, onto this shadowy daylight, a back door was opened, and Mrs. Sayce stood dimly visible at the head of her yard, clutching at a plaid shawl, and very earnestly passing her tongue over her lips:

‘Ber—tie? Break—fust!’

She could hear the voices of her neighbours on either hand. The dark morning seemed to invest each one of them with a peculiar detachment: the voice of Mrs. Parslow; the voice of Molly Gunn; Lizzy Dixon’s querulous outcry; the measured, mournful tones of Thomas Cooling; Macquisten’s brutal laughter; Nancy Tillit, Tom Tillit’s widow, calling stridently to Lettie and Jack; the united, youthful clamour of the Glydds; Henry Glazer’s mincing, almost gentlemanly accents; the quick, high, frequent giggle of Edie MacKatter.

‘Ber—tie? Break—fust!’

But whenever she opened her mouth, there was Macquisten’s mongrel dog opening his; the whole terrace reeked with the unsavoury yapping. And the voices of the Tufnell children made a high shindy ten houses away. A boy’s head popped out of a window, and called. Closer at hand it was possible to hear an undercurrent of more intimate things. Mrs. Norgate’s baby was choking in a room

next door; somebody had lost, or another had stolen, something, somewhere—it was not to be found—it had fallen under the table—it had gone down the sink; while the everlasting cluck of a hen served to bind the whole conglomeration of near and distant sounds together. It was a heartless chuckle, the voice of this one hen; terrible in its suggestion of eternal squalor; and, with a hand pressed hurriedly over her mouth, suddenly Mrs. Sayce began to cry.

The tears were running down her cheeks. And in the tiny kitchen, where damp clothes sagged between the walls, there was no further necessity to hold back her sobs while she crumbled her stale bread, or lifted, but never as far as her lips, a cup of very weak and flavourless tea. A cat was walking endlessly over the floor. Now it would strut in grotesque fashion, with erect tail, and sidelong glances at the woman at the table, who had buried her face within her hands; now it would squat upon its haunches, hind leg up, and tongue working roughly over the fur; a thin creature, though finely marked, that came to her at last, and rubbed its wasted body against her leg. The action recalled her to her senses; with an impetuous movement she caught up the animal, and carried it in her arms to the bedroom above, where the ceiling was like a black cloud over her head, and the wall-paper showed blue flowers on a faded, saffron ground.

There was a Guy, sitting in an elbow-chair, leering through eye-holes and mouth of its magenta mask into the pale light of the window. Its goblin body was the essence of dislocation. A vast inertia ran through the lolling arms, and its hands were black cotton gloves stuffed with straw.

For a short time, this wild figure was reflected in the eyes of the tabby cat, which presently began to struggle

violently in its mistress's arms, uttered a low whimper, and ran from the room; while Mrs Sayce, starting out of her reverie, saw a cloth cap lying in a chair—a woollen muffler hanging on the knob of a cupboard door—the bed, tumbled, glimmering palely, pushed up into the angle of two saffron walls. In addition to her other duties, there was the bed to be made. Sitting on the foot of it, she rocked her body a little, looked at her toes, fell at last into complete stillness; then she snatched her clasped hands from between her knees, clicking her tongue, and crying out that she must pull herself together.

Pushed into a rent of the window-pane was a crumpling of old newspaper; this she removed, thereby letting in wreaths of the damp mist, which chilled her lungs, and crept into every conceivable corner of the room. Within a few minutes, the paper was back again in the jagged rent of the window; but her mind had been restored to its accustomed energy, she was working quickly and easily; her duties were not so difficult as she had supposed.

On one occasion, while she was bending low over rough sheets, and thin blankets, to make the tumbled bed, her foot kicked against a pipe, a man's pipe, that had fallen to the floor; and her hand fell upon a boy's firework, a Catherine-wheel, that was to have spun round and round. She threw the pipe straightway across the room, but the other she held for one short moment against her heart; and very soon afterwards, her bed then being made, she was patting, pulling, tying, twisting, and tweaking the embellishments of the Guy.

For no one could have admitted that this Guy was ready to be pushed through the streets. There were lacking those final touches that her son Bertie would have given to the grand thing. Some faded piece of finery,

found in a drawer, and tied, or pinned, or stuck into some part of the beast's anatomy. Anything that might bring a nod of approval, or a shrug of jealousy, from street children. Pat it into shape. Button up the coat. Wind the muffler on. Anything that should lend an air of conspiracy—there's a big knot—and gunpowder to the whole business. And let the long ends of this muffler hang like hooligans over the breast. Presently she stood back, very quiet and still, with her hands pressed to her eyes.

Into the tiny, grotesque body, Mrs. Sayce had pushed, and prodded, and stuffed, and bundled, all the deformity of the world. Beneath a boy's cloth cap, and from the voluminous folds of a muffler, the magenta face shone forth with a fierce, disturbing beauty. Stark and evil, it seemed to glow with a deeper light than that which was coming through the window; and to nod cunningly with every step of the stair when she carried down her precious burden, and sat it in an old perambulator that was covered with the thick dust of a year. She went very carefully, now. There were so many things to be put right; little things that must not be forgotten. The thought occurred to her, that this was the most important moment she had ever known. Tuck it tightly everywhere. Prop the nodding head. Lifting her own, she listened to the voices of far-distant children, chanting the Guy Fawkes song:

Please to remember

The Fifth of November. . . .

The rhythm was both cheeky and inspiring; and after a while it was broken, from somewhere in the terrace, by the quick, high, frequent giggle of Edie MacKatter. Mrs. Sayce wheeled her perambulator to the door; and through the dark November streets, she pushed her little Guy.

## II

She had slipped out of Hannibal Terrace with scarcely a sign from her neighbours. Only once did she hear the voices of people who had recognized her—two voices, that spoke in thick, sudden tones from the morning mist:

‘Elf!’

‘Yus?’

‘Look, Elf! Ain’t that Emma Sayce pushin’ a guy?’

‘Your heyes wants seein’ to, Agatha!’

‘*Ain’t* that Emma Sayce pushin’ a guy?’

‘Mebbe,’ said Alfred Glydd, thoughtfully; ‘mebbe it is. . . . Sayce come ’ome larst night. I could ’ear ’im singin’. . . . Dassay ’e come back for little Bertie. . . .’

‘. . . it *were* Emma Sayce. . . .’

‘Mebbe . . . too far orf now for a bloke to see. . . .’

. . . And after that, the bend of the road had hidden her, and she had gone on and on, past Durrant and Lowe’s, and the shop where she bought her candles. ‘Too far orf, now, for a bloke to see.’ But not too far for her to hear the buzz of their voices, in every beat of her timorous heart. No, never too far for that! She crossed the Avenue, skirted the High School, and tilted the pram towards Tinker’s Heath.

She walked far that day. She was a little woman, pushing a Guy. Beyond Pewter Hill, the road to the Heath was long and lonely; but the length and the loneliness pleased her, for she was an artful one, and asked nothing better than to be left alone with the dark morning and the nodding, magenta face of her goblin Guy. ‘Ber—tie? Break—fust!’ Lor’! Hadn’t she been an artful one? Hadn’t she, now? Hadn’t she been a cunning one, jest!

Here and there, the fog was lifting; and once, far ahead,

she thought that she could see the figure of a man on that dim road. . . . But he went away, slamming a gate behind him. . . . Near Rington Cemetery, a sad-faced woman called to her; and she received the penny with a queer blend of pride and distraction, thanked the lady kindly, and hurried on. Hurried on, up the road to the Heath that was so long and lonely; and the loneliness sang to her: 'Elfred and Agatha Glydd, why couldn't they understand?' She was a little woman, pushing a Guy; and she was tramping, tramping, until her thin shoes began to blister her thin feet.

Up on the empty Heath a slow wind was moving, catching at the fringe of her shawl, and peopling the wide spaces with chanting voices.

Amongst them, she could hear particularly the voices of children, the buzzing of the Glydds, and the drunken tones of a man whom she hoped never to see again. . . . And suddenly one voice that began to materialize into a face, a face that she had not thought to see there, the thin-lipped, high-cheeked, brutal face of Macquisten. It came towards her out of the pale mist; a thrusting, triumphant face, that followed, and would not leave her. as she drew back trembling on Tinker's Heath:

'Come 'ome drunk, ain't 'e—larst night?' it was saying. 'I 'eard 'im! Went orf agin, drunk—ain't 'e, larst night? Wheer's Bertie?' It seemed to have no other thought but that. 'Come 'ome drunk, ain't 'e—larst night? I 'eard 'im! Went orf agin, drunk—ain't 'e, larst night? Wheer's Bertie?' She turned to go; but the face followed her along the Heath: 'Took the kid away wid 'im, ain't 'e—larst night? I 'eard 'em! Left yer alone agin, 'as 'e—Missus? Lor' lumme! Left yer quite alone!' She tried to go from him; but still the face followed; and when at last it



changed its question for another, she answered proudly, standing her full height, and looking at the Guy: 'It's a great day wid the children, Mr. Macquisten. It's Guy Forks day. Yass! And you knows well enough as I'm doin' wot Bertie would of wished.' Poor, dear Bertie. Dear little Bertie. *Why* couldn't they understand? Presently Macquisten's dog came running up, and sniffed and barked at the Guy; and she hurried away, horrified, to the dwindling sound of the barking and Macquisten's brutal laughter—hurried away, and away, across Tinker's Heath, and down Dornford Ditch, and over the old bridge by Fell Junction that spanned the railway-line.

She was a weary woman, pushing a Guy: and the Guy wagged its head when the pram jolted, and the ends of the muffler ran in the wind, while from street and tenelement, tower and steeple of the gradually approaching roadway, she thought that she could hear, exalting, echoing, rolling, flying over the darkening landscape, the Guy Fawkes song:

Please to remember  
The Fifth of November. . . .

Would she ever forget it? God in Heaven, would she ever forget it?

### III

The voice of a great crowd was behind her back; it came from beyond the entrance of the steep alley that sloped to the river. Down this dark and narrow by-way, she and her Guy had been approaching the river; but there are few people who do not look back over their shoulders at that inspiring, terrible sound. Mrs. Sayce looked over her shoulder, and beheld a furnace in Heaven.

It might have been some celestial heart that was burning, or a bitter wound gashed by the tapering church-spire whose upper portion rose darkly above the summit of the hill. She had been going to the river, but here was a fire. So she turned her perambulator; and, allowing its handle to drop against her breast, pushed it up into the glaring dusk of this day that never had been very light.

She emerged from the mouth of the alley with her face shining; and walked across the level of the empty Market Square, where sparks drifted and tossed above her head, and shadows of the distant crowd ran over the ground to meet her. Sometimes, she could pick out the shape of a man's hat, ridiculously distorted; or a woman's dancing bonnet. Her mind was bewildered by these things, and without success she strove to follow some particularly anxious train of thought, of something that would have been done by now if she had gone down to the river: that could be done, possibly, when she had come to the scene of the fire. The many units of her thought were like the sparks that tossed above her head: brief visions that came before her eyes, and went out, and made room for more. When, at last, the people were around her, stretching their reddened, eager faces, she was full of the clearest schemes, and there was no time in which to sort and examine them. Carried along by the hurried course of the crowd, presently she was surrounded by rough-toned, indefinite voices that called a thousand questions at the corner of the old church of St. Mary. A child pointed, and he and his companion stared ruefully at their own inferior guy. And suddenly she looked on something that was brighter than a vision, and louder than a voice; that whirled his tortured red arms above and before her, and rocked his

body to and fro, and cracked his crimson fingers, and threaded them through the house.

A burning house. A tall house where the roof and upper windows had already fallen in; it stood upon the corner of a timber-yard, and when she turned her head, Mrs. Sayce could see that certain beams, and spars, and scantlings, stacked in the path of falling debris, were burning too.

The train of thought, which recently had made a little progress since its tentative beginnings in the Market Place, now came fully into flower. Better than the river. Better than the river. It was foolish of her: but she wanted to be able to whisper it to her little Guy. To see some kind of expression crack or wrinkle the stiff surface of the magenta mask. Her wonderful scheme. How would she do it? Artfully; calmly; without any fuss. She would follow the children, who were pushing their prams up the soaring street.

It was a street that rose in a half-circle round the timber-yard, as though a staircase were mounting and circling the hall of a house. When she had come to the top of it, Mrs. Sayce found herself in the grand company of children mustering their guys. Clutching at her plaid shawl, she tried to count the goblin creatures that were passing on every hand. The strong glow of the fire seemed to invest each one of them with a peculiar detachment: guys with pink faces, and guys with green; guys that were yellow, and guys that were red; blue guys, mauve guys, brown guys, violet guys; purple guys, orange guys, black guys and grey guys and snowy guys; sad guys and happy guys; artful guys, simple guys, evil and good guys; guys with fat faces, and guys that were thin as a lath; rich guys, and poor guys, and drab guys, and guys that were

bright as a blessing, and guys that were grim as a curse; and they seemed to talk and laugh with one another, to hold deep conversation, to nod their masked and portentous faces as the wheels of the perambulators went round.

One or two of the bolder children were moving towards the crazy wooden fence that skirted the brink of the yard. Elsewhere, she could hear the hissing of the engines, and could see their columns of stiff, glittering water, steady as beams of moonlight, that might as well have battled with the flame of a sunset sky. Near her, two people were talking. The voices were hushed, and awed, yet tinged with a kind of shocked enjoyment; from them, she learnt that a woman had perished in the fire, whilst her boy had been saved. 'There. Bless 'er 'eart!' 'Pore innercent kid.' Mrs. Sayce tightened her fingers round the handle of the perambulator, and began to cry.

She was still crying two minutes later, standing by the wooden paling, crooking one of her fingers against her teeth.

She did not know that she was crying. She knew only that she was so near her goal. What a wonderful finish to her day's journey! Yes! *He* would have ended it so! Bertie would have come up to this fence, searching . . . searching . . . for some gap through which he could drop his guy. . . .

He would have looked with a child's big gravity on its last goblin hours; he would have joined the solemn procession of guys, that marched to the fires of retribution. . . .

A fierce light shone above the jagged top of the palings. She looked about her, and already the masked gods of Treason were being thrown to the flames. Hollow-eyed, and rigid-necked, the goblin aristocrats rode up in

their tumbril-perambulators and barrows and boxes on wheels, and were hurled—as light as straw, and a few old clothes, were they!—over the wooden fencing, and down into the timber-yard below. A policeman stood near her, watching the children, but he did not seem to care. He stood . . . near them . . . and her . . . and watched. A wind sprang up; a wisp of hair tapped her for a whole minute on the cheek. Then Mrs. Sayce shivered in her shawl. She would go over there—over there—where the crowd was thinner, and the wind, in that sheltered spot, would not ruffle. . . .

Did not ruffle the boy's cloth cap, or the woollen muffler, or snatch at the mask with its rough fingers, as she stooped gently over the perambulator, and lifted her Guy, and carried him towards a crimson gap in the wooden fencing. She tried to approach nearer at that spot, but the heat stopped her. Everywhere she could hear the voices of children; the thump of the axes; men calling, and the fire hissing. In the middle of it all, a heavy footstep came, and Mrs. Sayce turned her head. She was unable for a moment to see the policeman with anything but her eyes.

When the colour of his sharp, red face, and the stillness of his helmet, had reached into her mind, she did not know what to do. She may have been an artful one in her back-yard at home, but now all her cunning deserted her, and she did not know what to do. What could she do? She hugged her arms about the Guy. But the policeman took it from her, and the policeman lifted it up. . . .

He lifted it up, and Bertie's mother cried in her heart: 'If only his eyes could peep through, now! If only Bertie's eyes could peep through the mask, and see me, for one last moment, standing here!'

But there was no one to help her. All her senses were strangely acute. She could see everything very exactly; very crimson in the light of the fire. She could hear the whole world humming, near and far; the clucking of the hen in Hannibal Terrace. Yet everything around her was very still.

Everything except this man who was standing before her; whose slight, slow movements were bringing the day to its appointed end. He lifted it up, the little, delusive, goblin bundle, that surely was too heavy to be stuffed with straw. . . .

‘Oh, Mister! Mister!’

The policeman muttered: ‘Lord o’ mercy, what a heavy Guy!’

‘Mister! Mister!’

‘Lord o’ mercy, what a heavy Guy!’

And as she raised her hands to Heaven, he began to take the mask off Mrs. Sayce’s Guy.

SYBIL PYE

## RUPERT BROOKE

‘But him, on whom, in the prime  
 Of life, with vigour undimmed,  
 With unspent mind, and a soul  
 Unworn, undebased, undecayed,  
 Mournfully grating, the gates  
 Of the city of death have for ever closed—  
 Him, I count him, well-starr’d.’

*Fragment of a ‘Dejaneira.’* M. ARNOLD.

Well-starr’d indeed—and to many of us it would perhaps seem better to leave it at that: to forgo attempts to reproduce so unseizable a charm of mind and character, as that which now makes Rupert Brooke the loss to us he is.

On Rupert Brooke’s achievements as a poet and essayist, much criticism has already appeared. Some of this would, I think, have filled him with that ‘comic and irrational pleasure’ he wrote<sup>1</sup> of, after the publication of his first book; other would certainly have furthered the determination ‘to continue writing poems and plays, however little I earn’, which he notes as the result of true criticism. What one is glad to remember is that he was himself his keenest and most severe critic—that in spite of a wide popularity, he nursed no illusions. Of the five now famous War sonnets he wrote just before his death—in answer to some appreciation—‘I thought *four* and *five* good, the rest poor—but not worthless. Training disconcerts one . . .

<sup>1</sup> In a letter of summer 1911.

One requires a larger period of serenity, a more certainly undisturbed sub-consciousness. If the s.c. is turbulent, one's draught from it is opaque. Witness the first three sonnets.'

Most of us would hesitate, I think, to class those first three sonnets as 'poor'. But what a salutary good sense the comment shows, and what a power, alas, for growth that was never to have its outlet! He used to speak much of the difficulties which lay in the path of a poet anxious to study the technique of his craft. For any other art, he said, he could have found a school where rules were taught, and methodical criticism offered. That he adopted with diligence the only safe substitute for such instruction, the searching study of good models, all who knew him testify.

In those long discussions in the garden of the old vicarage at Grantchester, where every subject was touched on—if few conclusions reached—one quality of his was especially apparent: I mean that docility and gentleness which has well been called 'the necessary midwife of genius'.

Never was there a more sympathetic opponent: he had a way sometimes of working the last speaker's opinion into his own reply in such a manner that his dissension appeared merely a comment on some conclusion already reached.

This was not a complicated process, but the effect of a natural kindness and sense for good manners. It made him a rare companion: and more than once brought to mind Keats's suggestive words:

'Man should not dispute nor assert, but whisper results to his neighbour.'

At other times he would sit, all through a long discussion,



looking in silence from speaker to speaker 'with soft, abstracted air' till we were tempted to believe his mind had wandered far from present themes; had not, every now and then, some quick pertinent comment, or question, with a sudden intentness in his look, showed a mind awake.

It is true that at times this abstraction went deeper, and really carried him beyond the moment—as he describes it doing in the poem called 'Dining-room tea—'. I remember this happening in the middle of a game one day. 'Up Jenkins' we were playing—a favourite at that moment—and it fell to Rupert's turn to order all hands to be laid palm downwards on the table before him. Then, instead of proceeding to decide which one concealed the hidden sixpence, he just sat looking quietly at them, till shouts of impatience began to rise from all the line of players. Smiling half-apologetically, he said 'Oh—but hands are so beautiful'. It was interesting to see, combined with this quality, so strong a sense as his for ordinary, practical life. The constant small decisions required to run a day's machinery were never allowed to become with him the burden they so often are to people of wide imagination. In one of our discussions, the phrase 'an artistic eye in a business head' caught his attention; he said he believed the combination *was* possible, and he certainly aimed at making it so. I think there is no doubt he had a happy talent for organization, and that he combined it with social gifts really surprising in one of his naturally shy temperament. These powers were conspicuous on one occasion at Grantchester, when three separate May Week parties, falling on the same date and anxious not to deprive each other of guests, combined to meet in our garden. Among the mutual acquaintances, there seemed a large number of people strange to each other, and

having little clue to the tastes and outlook of the company as a whole; and the task of combining such diverse elements into one easy and sympathetic social body, appeared, to an onlooker, barely worth the attempt. Rupert, however, thought otherwise—or, rather, I do not believe he thought at all—he just moved from group to group, dissolving incongruities and creating links. The contrast of his conspicuous appearance and his unobtrusive manner, gave the scene a character which cannot, I think, have escaped any one but himself. His genuine interest quickly spread; and conversation on rational and lively lines succeeded the stiff commonplaces which had previously threatened the company with a paralysis of boredom.

To us who knew him in all moods, this quiet elegance of behaviour gave special poignancy to the one which was likely soon to follow it—being, indeed, never long absent—I mean that wild and mocking gaiety so inseparable from pictures called up by his name. The power he elsewhere showed of overleaping obstacles was exercised here to the full: no witty extravagance was too daring to be carried off by his unfeigned, bewildering laughter. Sometimes, when after a day's work in Cambridge, he would appear in the half-darkness among the garden trees, that laugh and glancing look seemed almost disembodied; the attributes of some wild thing our fancy had created to fill this silent leaf-grown place. But the faun-like sound had a kind human tone in it always, belying such notions. The stimulus and warmth of its gaiety could be shared without a pang, even by its momentary victim—though, indeed, this was oftenest himself, if not some abstraction equally unwoundable.

In that same garden—with its darkly-grouped tall trees,

and roses whose wild-brier stocks had long ago outgrown their grafts, and now hung laced together in wild festoons and arches, dotted with small flowers—a number of us once read *Antony and Cleopatra*, Rupert taking the part of Antony. When he came to the great climax, and, with a voice scarcely audible, read the soliloquy:

‘I will o’ertake thee, Cleopatra, and  
Weep for my pardon, so it must be, for now  
All length is torture . . .’

broken only by the twice-repeated call for Eros—the very tree-shapes seemed to take on a tragic significance. Few of us will be able to read those words again without hearing his voice. Afterwards he told us his explanation of the mysterious passage in Act I, Sc. iii, beginning with Cleopatra’s

‘Courteous Lord, one word . . .’

and ending

‘’Tis sweating labour  
To bear such idleness so near the heart  
As Cleopatra this . . .’

It was, that the queen was even then with child.

In spite of his expressive quality of voice and rare power of employing it, he had not, I think, any marked talent for acting. For this reason he was chosen to declaim only the chorus parts in the performances of Marlowe’s *Faustus*, which took place that summer in Cambridge. Even this was not wholly a success. We missed at the performance all the charm of those rehearsals of his part with lovely gestures, which took place daily in the vicarage

garden, when he would choose as audience the fat bull-terrier that belonged to the house. Standing under a brier-arch, with bare feet, and shirt open, he would appeal with passion to the dog, giving chance observers the joy the audience was to miss.

His gay unembarrassed laugh of pleasure still rings in one's head—one knew so well the sound of it. We heard it one night that we bathed by moonlight above Byron's pool. He had climbed a young poplar tree to dry himself, and the tree bending right over with his weight, he hung there with his yellow hair and the topmost leaves almost sweeping the long grass. I do not know why this picture should so strongly have suggested one of Blake's little woodcuts; his pleasure at being the cause of some happy notion was impossible to resist.

Among all his freedoms, this absence of self-consciousness was, perhaps, the most remarkable: it made so many things possible that the less fortunate have to forgo. Qualities having the essence and charm of childhood would drift suddenly across his mature moods—till imagination grew bewildered, losing count of time, and we seemed looking at the very gestures of the child he must have grown from. This happy survival was, perhaps, most obvious at some moment when an idea first seized him in its grip. Outward activity came to a pause; both body and mind, it seemed, were subdued to one listening attitude.

' . . . As when the spell of thought  
Lays hold upon a child,  
Who feels no captive yet  
And when he shall, that instant will escape.'

Not for him, though, was escape to be so rapid: hours

and even days would pass, and still the spell be visible. But when it broke, with what a leap he caught the stream once more—that swift tide of sensation whose value he could heighten with an artist's power, till each moment carried its full measure of significance!

On the night *Faustus* was performed, gay sights were seen in Cambridge; for the company, still in all their dresses—devils, ecclesiastics, virtues, and vices—drove in procession through the streets on their way to a friendly garden, where by torch and bonfire light they danced and feasted. Rupert, as the Chorus, had worn a long, full gown of black, cut like a medieval scholar's cloak, and a cap of the same date and colour. As these were thought unsuitable for dancing in, properties were searched, and he appeared now in a close-fitting purple doublet and long hose, with the many-pointed gold crown of some player-king set on his head.

Outside the ring of lights the night was as dark as his dark dress, and his figure—unexpectedly tall in such a guise—rapidly melted into it; but the fitfullest gleam from the bonfire would catch and run up the tall points of this crown, giving it and his head a sort of ghostly detachment from his body, and marking vividly the peculiar golden quality of his hair. This hair, escaping from under the crown, flapped and leapt as the dance grew wilder: and all the while one was aware of that strange anachronism—the lighted eyes and serious face of a child's complete absorption, and again the detached watchful intelligence, alert to catch only at the finer uses of experience.

In the evenings, when rehearsals were over, he would read to us. Our sitting-room was small and low, with a lamp slung from the ceiling, and a narrow door opening straight into the dark garden. On quiet nights, when

watery scents and sounds drifted up from the river, this room half suggested the cabin of a ship. Rupert sat with his book at a table just below the lamp, the open door and dark sky behind him; and the lamp-light falling so directly on his head would vividly mark the outline and proportions of forehead, cheek and chin; so that in trying afterwards to realize just what lent them, apart from all expression, so complete and unusual a dignity and charm, I find it is to this moment my mind turns.

His type was, I suppose, entirely English, but when he spoke, and especially when, as now, he read aloud, there was a clearness in his diction, an expressive freedom in the movement of his lips, that one associates with races to whom speech comes quicker than it does to us, and whose use of consonants is more adroit and telling. I believe an eye unpractised in such things could often have read what he was saying merely by watching his mouth—as one can with people long trained to give speech its fullest value at a distance.

Of the things he read to us, short poems of Donne and of Swinburne, Synge's 'Deirdre' and Meredith's sonnet-cycle, 'Modern Love', stand out clearly in my mind; the last giving him marked occasion for the unforced variety which so distinguished his reading voice.

He would drop from an airy lightness to a sombre, deep emotion with a suddenness and grace that made us catch our breath. Controlled by so just a sense of rhythmic value, these rapid transitions suggested the fine changes in a dancer's movement—or in those of his own body when he leapt from a height into the river, to swim with measured stroke beneath its shadowy banks.

His more serious literary admirations were rather guessed at than spoken of. A subject that moved or deeply

interested him was apt to bring on a monosyllabic fierceness, as if he feared the effect of open discussion on thoughts still tentative and new-winged. Chance references and quotations, however, would reveal the wide lines of his taste and knowledge; and though it was work for various prizes and for his fellowship which had perhaps first taken him so much among the Elizabethans, it was a true inclination that kept him there, and that made them always the most pervading influence in his work. His quotable familiarity with Shakespeare was extraordinary; the sonnets seemed all there in his head; and lovely lines from them and from the plays would be dropped into the air at all sorts of casual moments, and always with such feeling for their true qualities, that they remain transfixed in one's mind with the background of place and circumstance which had called them forth.

On some days he would take an armful of books into a canoe, and keeping a paddle in his left hand to steady it while the current drifted him along, would make rapid notes on scraps of paper from one book and another, and, in an easy mood, read out passages to enjoy the sound of the varying forms and cadences. Spenser, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster and many lesser-known song-writers of their time—all these keep an added gracious quality for those who heard them in this manner, among the dark reflected trees and the sudden wide openings across flat misty meadows.

One of these skyey spaces he would often pause at. The splendid proportions of the tree-groups that bound it, and the pale far-running distance between, 'where anything might happen', made it seem to him a happy setting for some largely-planned play. As he looked smilingly from serene depth to shadowed height, the plan, perhaps, was

already half in mind; at least, the hopes concerning it seemed greatly nourished by such space to muse in.

The affection he felt for this river is already familiar to readers of his poems. Each curve of its course, and each tree-clump that marked it, seemed known to him with a peculiar intimacy—like that which attaches sometimes to things constantly and affectionately handled.

Coming up with him in a canoe those three miles from Cambridge to Grantchester, on a dark, starless night, this knowledge was sufficiently startling to one possessing no clue to it. Every possible landmark seemed merged in a soft blackness; even the water-surface had ceased to show the faintest gleam, and met its muffled banks invisibly. Except for the low sound of the paddles, we might have been floating in some new medium, without boundaries and out of reach of light—of time, too, perhaps. But Rupert kept a steady course; he would know, he said, when we were nearing home, by the sound of a certain poplar tree that grew there: its leaves rustled faintly even on such nights as this, when not a breath seemed stirring. We only half believed him; there were so many poplar trees by that river, and it sounded absurd to recognize the voice of one. But he was right; and he landed us without hesitation, and moored his boat as easily, it seemed, as if he had all the light of day to help him.

One afternoon, when the canoe was tied up, and we sat on the river-bank, Rupert, in a mocking humour, started 'marking' the British poets according to his view of their respective merits, and awarding them degrees. When it came to giving Wordsworth only a I.3, I protested, and maintained that he had written the most beautiful two-stanza poem in the language. Asked to support this, I quoted 'A slumber did my spirit seal . . .',



and, on reaching the end, looked up, expecting still to be challenged. But I found instead that the whole air had changed. He sat silent and absorbed, a serious critic once again; a whiff of real poetry in the air had had its inevitable effect, and extravagance was blown away. This change was as sudden and as gracious as his other transitions, of voice and movement—like silences in music, enriching the alternated sound.

Rupert himself was not musical in the ordinary sense, but it was difficult to believe this when one saw him move—just as it is difficult to believe that the gazelles and kindred creatures that step delicately down to drink in African streams, are not, as we see them on the films, moving to a music that is heard only by themselves.

He often made one think of the qualities of animals. The line of his jaw when he laughed had the fine length and curve that are seen in lions on Assyrian friezes—or in the gentler type that lives with St. Jerome in his cave; and his gestures, too, had the quick flexible precision of creatures whose force can be concentrated and released again in one flashing moment.

He lay, one day, on the floor, playing with a puppy which was still at that 'loose' stage when, as he said, it seemed able to turn right round inside its skin; and the same gay, rapid elasticity appeared to mark both their movements, those of the darting puppy and of the hands which played a second to its game. They were strong flexible hands, with a thumb well divided-off from the palm; and this, perhaps, helped to make the grip of them so satisfying—though the reason was probably still more that they were sensitive enough to be a good medium for warmth and sincerity when he felt it. Their well-marked shape and articulation gave a Blake-like quality to his

free, direct gestures, which was specially distinct in the *Faustus* rehearsals already spoken of, and which gave to one spectator, at least, a strange experience. For when, in the following autumn, Nijinski danced the 'Rose' in London for the first time, the sensation of prevision was so marked as to be quite bewildering, until the source of it was hunted down—Rupert practising gestures for the Chorus in the old vicarage garden.

That characteristic pose, full-length on the ground, and supported on one or both elbows, was sure to be taken up sooner or later wherever there was grass or a floor to take it on. Reading, writing, and talking it seemed to suit equally well. On one occasion, when a lady stranger, apt rather to choose inopportune moments for action, broke in upon a talk, and was introduced to him, his grave and courteous salutation from the floor—there being no time for any change of pose—had all the air of those historic actions which create in a moment some quite new tradition of social observance: to bow from the floor seemed, after this, the height of elegant response to a formal greeting.

He liked young creatures of every kind; and he was particularly good at helping some of his own species through a stage that made their company sometimes a little less suited to his other friends. 'I can't understand all these personal businesses; every one seems to me so nice', he wrote, after an occasion of this sort; and one felt it was entirely true in his case.

Waste and solitary places gave him, in general, more pleasure than trim cultivated ones. He admitted the impressiveness of a row of white lilies, grown as they were in one garden he visited, against a green and silvery background of fig-tree boughs; but he said, all the same, that

they made him feel uncomfortable, 'as if the angel Gabriel might pop out from behind them at any moment and announce something'!

At this time he was almost entirely a vegetarian: he could not, he said, eat creatures with whom he felt a kinship. Happily fish were not included, but even so, this endearing trait hardly, I fear, helped him to secure the solid bodily basis so much required by work like his. At least one knows that the ill-health of the following year or two quickly obliged him to change these lighthearted ways.

Meanwhile, such wide friendliness kept him busy at times in the Vicarage garden: for this, being as damp as it was beautiful, harboured many young frogs, which led a perilous existence when there was much coming and going—even if they were not, as he affirmed, eaten in secret by the landlord. Consequently, one saw him at all times of day, squatting in the long grass and delicately guiding these small creatures into safer paths, out of the open.

Vegetarianism, by the way, was not his only frugality at this time. I remember him saying he found it quite easy to dress on £3 a year! What interests one deeply, I think, is to contrast these simplicities with the often violent richness of his fancy, and its still more violent expression—in his early work, especially. It seemed sometimes as if each extreme quality was to find at last its balanced opposite; and one would speculate, deeply arrested, on the fusion of these which must ultimately obtain. Was it already preparing, in the fiery rush of circumstance that flared round the last months of his life, and into which he plunged so ardently? For him the heat and vigour of it had no borrowed meaning: to focus this

thought truly, one must transplant his spirit to another age and scene—perhaps to the very islands where he died. And this, it seems to me, is no hard task. ‘They are revolutionary’, wrote Thucydides of the Athenians, ‘equally quick in the conception and execution of every new plan’. Of all the clear memories Rupert Brooke has left us, are not his rapid and felicitous ease, bodily and mental, his vigorous questioning of accepted standards, and finally the desire, which at times almost burnt him up in its flaming intensity, to find where beauty truly lay—are not these Athenian qualities those that will most remain?

‘I have seen,’ he wrote lightly in the last weeks of his life, ‘I have seen the Holy Land of Attica, and now may die’. We echo the thought for our comfort, feeling that in the association it suggests there is something more permanent and true than he was aware of.

## READERS' REPORTS

### CREATIVE WORKS AND STANDARD WORKS

This month's output of detective novels is unusually interesting. Interesting, both because the average standard is very high, higher than it has been during any month since the birth of *Life and Letters*, and because it divides itself quite clearly into creative and non-creative (or standardized) work. 'Creative', perhaps, may seem a high-sounding word to apply to the humble craft of the detective story; let me therefore explain that in calling a book 'creative', I mean that in style and atmosphere, and in the presentment of character, it tries to make something real, something beyond its own plot. If it does not do this, if it concentrates simply on constructing its plot, concealing its criminal, and providing its clues, it is *standardized*, an article of mass-production, like most articles of commerce, and must be judged and reviewed accordingly. It may, of course, within those limits, be well or badly produced, and there is an enormous difference between the 'good lines' in detective novels and the mere cheap rubbish; but the difference between any of them and a novel which has creative ability, even if it has half a hundred flaws, stares the reader instantly in the face. Unfortunately, creative writers, despite all the most favourable breeding conditions, are rare; and to find four in one month is a startling piece of luck.

The best of the four—shame upon all moderns—is beyond all doubt a novelist who has been fifty years in his grave. *The Mystery of Orcival* (Gollancz. 3s. 6d.) may not be the best detective novel in the world, but Gaboriau is certainly one of the best detective novelists. In the first

place, there is a mystery, and there is a detective. Lecoq's deductions are both natural and exciting; and we cannot complain, as we sometimes can in the case of French detective novels, that the novel has ousted the detection. The plot is as good as that of the *Mystery of the Yellow Room*, which is saying a great deal, and the book is much better written and contains a novel into the bargain. As to the novel, it is French. This sums it up briefly, and also accounts for the mood of persons who, while admitting his technical triumphs, cannot read Gaboriau. They do not like the *crimes passionnels*, the wringings of hands and the weepings and the long-drawn-out emotional passages. With them one can but commiserate, for they have lost a book worth reading; but one can also ask which of the dozen other novels in our hands this month is likely to be reprinted fifty years after its author's death.

The answer, I am afraid, is none. The delightful product of Miss Clemence Dane and Miss Helen Simpson would be most likely, if it were not, in spite of its charm, so light a trifle. *Enter Sir John* (Hodder & Stoughton. 7s. 6d.) must, however, be heartily recommended to all who appreciate good workmanship. Its central personage—a mixture, says the old playgoer, of Sir Henry Irving and Sir Charles Hawtrey—is admirably done, and its minor characters, particularly the provincial players, are also exactly right. It is very well written indeed, and, best of all, it does not take itself too seriously. To pick holes, I think it could have spared the chase of the last two chapters, good as the taxi-drivers are. When I read it first, in some magazine or other, that chase was not there; and it reads now rather as though it had been put in to pad out the story to a length 'suitable for publication in novel form'. I should prefer it omitted; but, omitted

or not, it does not alter the fact that this is a charming book.

The two remaining are not on so high a level. Neither Mr. H. Maynard Smith, of *Inspector Frost's Jigsaw* (Benn. 7s. 6d.), nor Miss (?) Kay Strachan, of *Footprints* (Gollancz. 7s. 6d.), is a writer of the same calibre as the three foregoing, and their present works are certainly not likely to be remembered beyond the present generation—though that should be praise enough for most writers. But both books are good, and should be read by everyone. Mr. Maynard Smith's Inspector Frost is a real person, and (what is more difficult) a real policeman; and the country town in which he solves his problem is a real country town. We can walk with him into the inn-parlour where the respectable draper disputes with the shady lawyer on the right of the lord of the manor to his estates, and sit with him in the kitchen of the large, cheerful cook and the thin, waspish parlourmaid. The crime is plausible and plausibly discovered, and there are clues available for the intelligent. But there might have been a map.

As to *Footprints*, the best praise I can give it is to say that I entirely disbelieve in the 'psychological case' which caused the mystery; but that I was not in the least resentful, because I was so absorbed in reading the book, not in order to see whose was the guilty bloodstain, but in order to decide which of this well-imagined family could have shot Richard Quilter. I did find out, but so late in the book that it becomes a tribute to the author and not to me. There is human imagination at work in this book, and the device of giving all the evidence in the twenty-year-old letters of actors in the tragedy was well worth employing.

After these four, a number of worthy 'standardized novels' come out rather unfortunately, as Cambridge

classical students used to do in a very talented year. They would have received higher praise if the field had not been so exceptionally strong. Two of them hover on the brink of being really original. *The Perfect Murder Case*, by Christopher Bush (*Heinemann*. 7s. 6d.), might have lived up to its name if its author had known how to write. His plot, though owing an idea to Mr. Edgar Wallace's best-known book, is very ingenious and the method of detection intelligent. But he writes so badly that it almost seems as though, by mistake, he had published the notes for his novel instead of the novel itself. And why did he want such a string of detectives? and all so alike that it is impossible to remember which is which? His book should be read, nevertheless; and so should Mr. T. L. Davidson's *Murder in the Laboratory* (*Methuen*. 7s. 6d.). Mr. Davidson falls down on his plot. He writes well; he knows a good deal about the atmosphere of a provincial university, and can create convincing professors. Also, he can make a plausible American, which, to judge from the attempts of others, is not an easy task. But his murder is melodramatic and absurd, and does not fit the university atmosphere at all. Perhaps he can get a better plot next time; if so, he may do really well.

The judges in Messrs. Methuen's detective novel competition apparently prefer style to plot; for they gave the second prize to Mr. Davidson, and the first to Mr. N. A. Temple-Ellis, for a book which the author has called *The Inconsistent Villains*, but which should really be called *The Idiotic Villains*, for never did any one behave so foolishly as the various gangs which haunted his Essex marshes. It is never explained, for example, why a financier whose habits were so disreputable that he dared not call in the police to look for his lost daughter, should



so persistently demand the services of a private investigator who was a perfect monument of public virtue. But, barring the plot, this book is good reading. It is shocker rather than detective story, and it is standard. But it is good standard, well-written, amusing, and adequately exciting.

There follow four perfectly standard works: *Whose Hand?*, by Vernon Loder (*Collins*. 7s. 6d.), *Death at Four Corners*, by Anthony Gilbert (*Collins*. 7s. 6d.), *The Dagwort Coombe Murder*, by Lynn Brock (*Collins*. 7s. 6d.), and *The Corpse on the Mat*, by Milward Kennedy (*Gollancz*. 7s. 6d.). Of these, the first is the best. Mr. Loder is a competent workman, and his crime and its detection are well worked out. His book lacks atmosphere, and I find his fraudulent company very difficult to credit; but it is quite good reading. He should, however, have told us whether or not the secretary snored. Mr. Gilbert is a writer who possesses intelligence, but unfortunately lacks both style and imagination, and tries to make up for this by a kind of *East Lynne* forcible-feeble sentimentalism. I have never met anything remotely resembling his clerical baronet of a hero, whose face *would* 'flush a terrible scarlet', and I hope I never may; or like his detective, who excels in making bricks without any straw at all. Mr. Gilbert is a cultivated man, but not a writer; and the general effect of his book is as though one should tell a skilled but unimaginative carpenter to make an ornate table without providing him with any sort of design.

Much the same criticism applies to Mr. Lynn Brock, who in the absence of character has crammed his story with incredible incident. (Incidentally, his book is hardly legible to the naked eye. If Messrs. Collins are going to use such small type solid, they ought in pity to give away

a magnifying-glass with each copy.) Mr. Brock has learnt that to make a good standard story, one ought to have 'alternative suspects'; consequently, he has at least half a dozen, but, as he has no sense of character, they never come alive or create any environment for his plot. They simply stick up their heads in turn, like so many Aunt Sallies waiting to be knocked over; and one cannot remember from chapter to chapter who they are, or care what happens to any of them. Mr. Kennedy, on the other hand, has only one Aunt Sally, and keeps it going through the whole of his book. This is not enough in a standard novel. The result is not a puzzle, but a bore; no one wants to go on interviewing the same 'property gentleman' for 150 pages. Nevertheless, Mr. Kennedy is intelligent also, and his is not a bad book. Mr. Gollancz prints his books nicely, but binds them badly; they will not open properly, and pages fall out. Of the publishers in this list, Messrs. Benn easily bear the palm for production.

*The Tannahill Tangle*, by Carolyn Wells (*Lippincott*. 7s. 6d.), is 'standard' also; but standard of a different type. It is a shocker-cum-detective, obviously aiming at a very large American sale, and probably getting it. It is a 'Fleming Stone' story; there have been about fifteen previously from its author's pen; and there is no reason why there should not be forty-five more. Of its kind, it is not bad; but the reader must not look for good writing or for much detection. Mrs. Wells's public does not want good writing, and Fleming Stone must obviously economize his efforts, or he could never last the course. This is a product standardized for the mass, for the readers of newspaper feuilletons. Mr. Brock and Mr. Gilbert are standardized only for the cultured—they are Essex cars rather than Fords.

Lastly, we have a novel which I should describe as 'amateur'. *The Three Amateurs* (Allen & Unwin. 7s. 6d.) may not be Mr. Michael Lewis's first effort, but it reads very like one. It has good points: the third amateur was a happy idea, and there is quite an attempt at character-drawing. But it is not very well managed; the first half drags a good deal, and in the second half the criminal eliminates so busily as to leave no possible suspect but himself. The book is fairly well written, and Mr. Lewis is worth watching as a 'possible'.

Mr. Wyndham Lewis's admirers have long been hoping for a re-issue of his excellent post-war novel, *Tarr*. (*Phoenix Library*. Chatto & Windus. 3s. 6d.) Apparently Mr. Lewis has held it back because he felt that, as it stood, the book needed re-writing; it was written hastily, he tells us, during a period of convalescence; so the new edition has been considerably enlarged and revised. After comparing the present version with what I remember of the book in its original form, I should say that the author has done his work very well indeed. I recollect having been delighted by it at a first reading some years ago, and, on looking through it again, I was once more, and as completely, subjugated by the extraordinary satiric verve which goes to its telling, the positively rhinoceros vigour with which the narrator tramples on the path he has set himself. Like Mr. Lewis's critical essays, which, however untidy and diffuse, do each of them contain enough controversial material to keep half a dozen lesser intelligences busily employed for a year, his novel seems to contain the matter of not one, but of several different novels, all thrown together with a gesture of prodigal exuberance between the end-papers of the

same book. Incidentally, it encloses the germ of many of Mr. Lewis's later volumes. *Tarr* can be recommended not only to Mr. Lewis's usual public, but also to a wider public in search of entertainment rather than instruction—to every reader, that is to say, capable of appreciating true satire when he finds it.

*The Philosophy of Plotinus, by W. R. Inge. Third Edition. (Longmans. 21s.)* It is a fact which I think the historian of English ideas will find significant that in ten years three editions of this profound and difficult work have appeared. It may be called difficult without any injustice to Dr. Inge's style: his exposition is always admirably clear and, when the occasion calls for it, eloquent. But the ideas which he has to convey, whether his own or his subject's, are in the last degree subtle, rarefied and elusive. I doubt if on its own merits the book would have made so deep an impression, let us say, thirty years ago. There must be a call for Platonism in the mental air of the day. Dr. Inge speaks of Plotinus as closing an age of free speculation, the longest that Europe has ever enjoyed. Are we not, perhaps, at the beginning of another age of free speculation?

It is an old law that you cannot get more out of a revolution than you put into it: the great Victorian agnostics went into battle with supernaturalism, dogmatists and preachers, and they came out of it dogmatists and preachers. But when the Dean of St. Paul's first began his studies in Plotinus twenty years ago, the imposing structure of naturalism was beginning to totter: to-day it is in ruins. The successive attacks of geologists, historians and biologists destroyed traditional religion: the mathematicians and physicists are making traditional science

appear as a hardly less primitive simplification of a world which is more mysterious than mysticism itself. Newman once brought scorn on his head by observing that whether the earth went round the sun or the sun round the earth no one could say till we know what motion is. A few years ago Poincaré repeated the dictum, very nearly in the same words, as an elementary mathematical truth.

The first condition of intellectual freedom, the absence of an orthodox body of conclusions, is with us. It is characteristic that spookery should rush in to fill the vacant space. There is a recurrent tendency in the human mind, when for the moment reason has run its head against a wall, to decry reason instead of knocking down the wall, to exult in the unintelligibility of things, and to start table-turning. It was so, conspicuously, in the age of Plotinus himself, and the memory of it has given Neoplatonism a bad name. But the teaching evoked in Dr. Inge's book is as unlike the Neoplatonism of, say, *Hypatia*, as Dr. Inge himself is unlike an Anglo-Catholic curate. Standing on the very edge of the darkness, Plotinus is still radiant with the old Hellenic rationality. It is this, I imagine, that drew Dean Inge to him and has kept him to his arduous discipleship.

The movement of our age in unmistakable, not only in professed works of philosophy like Canon Streeter's *Reality*. Mr. Middleton Murry calls for the recognition of mystical values in psychology: the hero of Mr. Beresford's *Writing Aloud* is to be a mystic and mathematician who is to solve the problem of matter. Mr. Dunne's *Experiment in Time* is an analysis of what Plotinus would have called noetic apprehension, which he would have understood, I fear, rather better than I did. To those who are following this trend, I recommend a book which has not yet received

much attention, Mr. Hyde's *Learned Knife*, as a most suggestive manifesto of the new tendency. Things are moving away from the sociological, psychological, historical interpretation of values in art and morals towards a realistic interpretation, in which Goodness and Beauty appear not as qualities of things existing anyhow but as realities of which things are the exponents and vehicles.

It is at this point that hard thinking is called for, and the virtue of Plotinus for this generation lies in his unique combination of a modern outlook and a classical approach. He is searching for what so many are searching for; but he has a different set of instruments: his background and tradition are not ours, his terminology needs to be adjusted at every turn to ours. The effort of making the adjustment is a discipline in itself. The result is to reveal an astonishing identity between his problems and those with which the resolution of the Newtonian universe into a system of relationships in an unimaginable continuum has confronted us. The Greek knew that his knowledge of the material world was slight and defective: he found it, therefore, easy to conceive that the latent reality might be something utterly inexpressible in terms of sense or metaphors derived from sense. And with all his humanism, he was quite prepared to believe that humanity might turn out to be a very small affair after all. We, after satisfying ourselves that man was the master of things and that reality was in the last analysis just billiard balls, have within the last few years had the minuteness of humanity enforced on our imagination and have discovered that, so far from being like billiard balls, reality is a supra-sensible construction of infinite complexity in a medium which, conceivably, is not different from the thinking medium itself. We are almost com-

pelled, in fact, to pick up the thread of speculation at the point where Plotinus dropped it, because, after many wanderings, we stand almost at the point where he stood.

*An Ambassador of Peace, by Viscount D'Abernon, Vol. I. (Hodder & Stoughton. 21s.)* From the Sahara of post-war reminiscences, Lord D'Abernon emerges like a butler with a salver of iced champagne. Though dealing almost wholly with a question of extreme dullness, that of reparations, this book stands apart from all of its type, in that it leaves the reader with a sensation of delicate enjoyment, somewhat sharpened by the closing anecdote. The reason for this is that the author, unlike his partners in great affairs, views the accidents of this world with an aesthetic and urbane detachment, which doubtless obtained his appointment to Germany after the war. To this attitude are added the qualifications of a sly wit and a large measure of literary ability. Lord D'Abernon, whether he started life as a pit-boy or came over with the Conqueror, has embodied in himself the great English tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, of an aristocracy that built an empire by accident but with overwhelming success; he is a type that cannot easily submit to beg the favour of a myriad giggling girls and to endure the boredom of earnest, but inept, parliaments; whom democracy is driving to dilettantism and the Stock Exchange; and without whom England will be the poorer. As early as 1920, while the whole world was clamouring for the settlement of debts, and looking to Germany as the ultimate creditor, Lord D'Abernon set himself to a harder task: Germany's economic restoration. He was the self-appointed instrument of England's assurance that Germany should not be delivered, bound, into the

clutches of France. And it is easy to imagine, from the pages of his diary, why that assurance carried weight, why successive German ministers looked to this twinkling old man as the rock on which they could build. The succeeding volume, dealing with the period of the Ruhr occupation, will explain even more.

From the point of view of the ordinary reader, Lord D'Abernon is at his best on the subject of people. The book is prefaced by various character-sketches of the chief statesmen with whom he had to deal; these are concerned, not with their faults, but with their merits, with the reasons, in fact, why they occupied their positions. Particularly, Mr. Lloyd George is rescued from the veil of unscrupulous opportunism with which he has since been enshrouded. And in 1929, when Berlin is displacing Paris as the capital of Europe, the cool estimate of the German character, by one who had opportunity of judging it under duress, is of profound interest. Illuminating and delicious sidelights emerge from the diary itself. 'Berlin, Nov. 7, 1920—One of the best-informed people here is the Papal Nuncio. . . . He recalls to memory the epitaph:

Bland, passionate and deeply religious  
He was second cousin to the Earl of Cork  
And of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.'

And, concerning the Spa Conference: 'Lloyd George and George Curzon are fine representatives. Impudence and Dignity, some foreign critic called them. But the impudence is so extraordinarily quick and intelligent and decided, and the dignity so grand in manner and imposing, that no country could wish for anything better. Lloyd George speaks only English. . . . The only French



he understands, so it is said, is that spoken by Lord Grey of Fallodon; both grammar and pronunciation must be Northumbrian.' Finally, the extracts are given coherent form by the excellent historical summaries of Dr. M. A. Gerothwohl. 'Mr. Lloyd George, on his return journey, had a private conversation with M. Poincaré in the Paris railway station; this merely served to accentuate mutual distrust.' Such statements are becoming all too rare in an age of excessive tact.

*Fishing Ways and Wiles*, by Major H. E. Morritt (Methuen & Co. 6s.), is in the best class of fishing-books, as fishing-books may be divided into three kinds. There is the scientific mind, all about Ephemeridae and Phryganidae, and the effect of light on the fishy eye, etc.; with diagrams and dissection plates of insects; the late Mr. Halford's books were in this class, and very interesting they are to the expert, but less amusing to the ordinary man, or even to the ordinary fisherman. Then there is the frankly descriptive fishing-book: 'a sudden tug at the line and a scream of the reel: "You have him", shouted Bill, "and he's a whopper,"' etc. Mr. Zane Grey's enormous books are full of this sort of thing, which is frankly boring to the ordinary reader, and of which even the keenest fisherman is soon tired. The best sort of fishing-book is not too scientific, nor is it merely repetition of incident. It must be written by a man who is a close observer of Nature, who has had large and varied experience of rivers and fish and the countryside, and who can tell us, in simple English, what he has observed. Needless to add, he must be a lover of his art, and of the places to which his art takes him. This sort of book can be read with pleasure by any one who has the sense of 'country'; and the best

and classic example of a good book about fishing is Lord Grey's *Fly-fishing*.

Major Morritt's book is, perhaps, not a classic. It is too much concerned with the practice and technique of the fisherman's craft (and therefore, perhaps, of more value to the practical angler). But the writer fulfils all the conditions postulated: he is a real fisherman and a real lover of the art. Moreover, he is not a purist. He will fish for trout and salmon everywhere and in every way, and (what is not always the case with writers of fishing-books) will catch—or at any rate hook—them anywhere: there are two excellent stories of fishing on the Western Front. Apart from his prowess as a fisherman, Major Morritt is no mean painter: indeed, an 'admirable combination', as Lord Howard de Walden says in his introduction, and as the pictures in the book show. Surely he is 'Dis carus ipsis' who can fish the Tees at will, who can extract trout at all times from that most beautiful and most irritating river, and can record its beauties in a picture like 'Wet Fly on the Tees' (p. 34)!

If this were a fishing-paper, and I had space enough, I could fill columns discussing the many questions, of absorbing interest to fishermen, on which Major Morritt discourses. Generally, I should be in complete agreement with him: for instance, when he denies that an east wind is necessarily an evil; when he says that more fish are lost by letting them do what they like than by being hard on them; when he maintains that prawn fishing for salmon is more difficult than fly fishing; when—but this is not the *Field*, and one must not be too technical. It is enough to say that in this case, at least, the paper cover of the book does not lie when it promises 'valuable information, not only to the beginner, but also to the

experienced fisherman'. I would go further and say that it fascinated one fisherman who, if not so experienced as Major Morritt, is not (alas!) a beginner.

*Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists*, by Percy Allen. (Cecil Palmer. 7s. 6d.) Ever since the days when Horace Walpole saw in Shakespeare's Leontes a deft portrait of Henry VIII, and in the play in which he figures 'a compliment to Queen Elizabeth, as an indirect apology for her mother, Anne Boleyn', the allegory and source hunter has been almost ceaselessly engaged in the profitless task of chasing fen-fires through the alluring domains of Elizabethan drama. It is, perhaps, too much to hope that his strident tally-hos should ring no more in our tortured ears, but, if we gain surcease, it is Mr. Percy Allen that we shall have to thank for it. With fell purpose (as we take it), Mr. Allen has so subtly and deliciously travestied the perennial allegory hunter's methods—principally by advancing postulated inspiration of the utmost unlikelihood and echoes that fail to reverberate—that we very much doubt whether that obstinate old pest will ever again summon up courage to raise his head. Quiet satire is always the most telling, and Mr. Allen is all the more destructive in his attack because he refrains from giving the slightest possible hint that his perverse, super-subtle reasoning, which reduces to absurdity all the well-known tenets, is not advanced in the best of good faith. We notice that most of his critics have paid him the equivocal compliment of taking his *obiter dicta* in deadly earnest, which, viewing their strictures upon them, leads up to the inevitable deduction that he is the victim of an *idée fixe* or some other form of mental obliquity. In this there is grave injustice: there can be no doubt of

Mr. Allen's normality. It is shown in the admirably-written fourth chapter of his book, a 'straight' essay clearly demonstrating that the Hamlet legend had its origin in a nature-myth, though, curiously enough, the essay has nothing to do with Mr. Allen's main thesis, and seems to have strayed promiscuously into his book. We take it, however, that the argumentative sections of Mr. Allen's work are not offered in good faith, since many of them are too preposterous to be worthy of serious consideration. Take his second chapter: it cannot surely be that we are asked to believe in all earnestness that Shakespeare had knowledge of the contents of most of the State papers and other documents of his time that have come down to us, several of which are here cited as evidence; and it is even less conceivable that the great poet had prescience of the deductions that Macaulay, Colonel B. R. Ward, and Mr. Martin S. Hume would make from these documents. That would be an uncharitable view, and we prefer to congratulate Mr. Allen on the brilliance of his flank attack on the allegory hunter. If we err in our assumption, we have it both ways, for, in that case, the very fatuity of the burlesque makes it equally telling.

*Children's Toys of Bygone Days*, by Karl Gröber and Philip Hereford (Batsford. 32s.), is one of the most delightful picture-books that have lately come my way. Unlike most books of the same kind, it is fully worth the thirty-two shillings charged for it. The introductory monograph is succinct and informative, and the series of plates chosen with even more than the usual German historic nicety and æsthetic discrimination. Many of the toys it illustrates are surprisingly beautiful.

*Heine, The Strange Guest, by Henry Baerlein (Bles. 12s. 6d.),* contains much that will be of interest to a reader unacquainted with the detail of the poet's life, but, I am afraid, can only serve to irritate those already in possession of the main facts. It is the worser sort of modern biography, written half in the manner of the historian, half in the manner of the novelist. Exceedingly diffuse and wordy. The verse translations are very bad indeed.

The best criticism of Miss Margaret Irwin's allusive narrative method will be found contained in the following quotation from her new book, *Fire Down Below (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.)*; it describes the hero's sensations on catching sight of his wife for the first time: 'He felt he was

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lying in a tepid bath scented with eau-de-cologne while a white hand held out to him a glass of iced water and lemon without sugar. . . .’ Such, incidentally, are the sensations of Miss Irwin’s reader; it is a question of whether or not he finds unsugared ice-water and lemon sufficiently stimulating to make it worth his while to put up with the discomfort of lying in a tepid bath—a tepid bath which rapidly grows cooler. Yet the writer of the present report must confess to having been an unconscionable time in getting out of it.

*From Double Eagle to Red Flag*, by General P. N. Krassnoff, reported on in these columns several months back, was in some ways a memorable and interesting book. *The Unforgiven*, by the same author (*Allen & Unwin*. 12s. 6d.), is disappointing. Both works have an obvious autobiographical basis; but *The Unforgiven*, like the later chapters of General Krassnoff’s first book, deals with the post-Revolutionary period of his reminiscences, which is too recent and far too painful to make satisfactory material for fiction.

*Brothers and Sisters*, by I. Compton-Burnett (*Heath Cranton*. 6s.), is one of the most remarkable and original novels I have read for a very long time. It is necessary to say so emphatically, because I fancy that it may easily be overlooked both by the reviewers and readers, not being a book whose value is immediately apparent on a cursory glance, nor even after reading the first score of pages. Every word must be read, for it is thick and packed, and consequently the reward is rich. A strange story, related almost entirely in dialogue, it is so bare, economical, and drily terrible as to suggest comparison with the more

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painful of the Greek domestic stories, yet the ironic humour gives it a twist which constitutes its own peculiar quality. It is like biting a sloe between the teeth. As sardonic as Jane Austen, as bleak as Emily Brontë, *Brothers and Sisters* stands on its own feet, queer, angular, deliberate, ungainly, impressive. Its fate will be interesting to watch. Will it pass unnoticed? will it find a crowd of imitators? The most that the reviewer can do is to draw attention to a book which should appeal to everyone interested in the possibilities of fiction.

To collect a series of essays by different hands, describing *Contemporary Movements in European Literature* (Routledge. 10s. 6d.), seems, on the face of it, such a laudable plan that the result is, by comparison, a little disappointing. The editors are Mr. William Rose and Mr. Jack Isaacs of London University. Mr. Isaacs's analysis of contemporary English movement is sound, if somewhat slapdash; Mr. Denis Saurat's facetious survey of modern French literature is a wretched piece of work; the book includes interesting and readable essays by Mr. Rose on Germany, Professor Arundel del Re on Italy, and Prince Mirsky on Germany.

*Parachute*, by Ramon Guthrie (Gerald Howe. 7s. 6d.), is certainly not a really fine novel nor, perhaps, is it even a very good one; slackly written, unequal, prone to sudden lapses; but there is something about the telling, or it may be about the personality of the novelist, which compels one to read it word by word, from beginning to end. The story is of two airmen who make their living by dizzy performances over country fairs. It is a book which has so far had very little notice, but which deserves to be read.



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*The True Heart* (Chatto. 7s. 6d.) is a charming little book, but not Miss Sylvia Townsend Warner's best. It opens with a long and really beautiful passage, describing a farm among the Essex marshes. Then, almost immediately, the novel begins to deteriorate, and Miss Warner's euphonious whimsicalities become rather wearisome.

*Ultima Thule*, by Henry Handel Richardson (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.), is the last volume of a trilogy, which concerns the gradually declining fortunes of a settler in the Antipodes. It is an impressive book; slow moving, heavy, but genuinely and (we feel) painfully written. Over-long perhaps, but very definite in the effect it makes.

*The Legion of the Damned*, by Bennett J. Doty (Cape. 7s. 6d.), is the entertaining account of a young American's experiences in the French Foreign Legion. The author deserted because he found himself put to building walls; otherwise he seems to have liked it well enough. How much, we wonder, of the moral conditions for which the Legion is distinguished, is he keeping back? A slightly disingenuous air pervades his book. Still, it is indubitably exciting, and Mr. Doty writes all the better for not knowing how to set about it.

*The Hinge of Heaven*, by Stephena Cockerell (Chatto. 7s. 6d.), is another American story, readable, adroit, charming, and slightly sentimental.

# LIFE AND LETTERS

EDITED BY DESMOND MACCARTHY

ASSISTANT EDITOR: OLIVER BRETT

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# LIFE AND LETTERS

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LYTTON STRACHEY

## MANDELL CREIGHTON

The Church of England is one of the most extraordinary of institutions. An incredible concoction of Queen Elizabeth's, it still flourishes apparently, and for three hundred years has remained true to type. Or perhaps, in reality, Queen Elizabeth had not very much to do with it; perhaps she only gave, with her long, strong fingers, the final twist to a stem that had been growing for ages, deep-rooted in the national life. Certainly our cathedrals—so careful and so unæsthetic, so class-conscious and so competent—suggest that view of the case. English Gothic seems to show that England was Anglican long before the Reformation—as soon as she ceased to be Norman, in fact. Pure piety, it cannot be denied, has never been her Church's strong point. Anglicanism has never produced—never could produce—a St. Teresa. The characteristic great men of the institution—Whitgift, Hooker, Laud, Butler, Jowett—have always been remarkable for virtues of a more secular kind: those of scholarship or of administrative energy. Mandell Creighton was (perhaps) the last of the long line. Perhaps; for who can tell? It is difficult to believe that a man of Creighton's attainments will ever again be Bishop of London. That particular concatenation seems to have required a set of causes to

bring it into existence—a state of society, a habit of mind—which have become obsolete. But the whirligigs of Time are, indeed, unpredictable; and England, some day or other, may well be blessed with another Victorian Age.

In Creighton, *both* the great qualities of Anglican tradition were present to a remarkable degree. It would be hard to say whether he were more distinguished as a scholar or a man of affairs; but—such is the rather unfair persistence of the written word—there can be little doubt that he will be remembered chiefly as the historian of the Papacy. Born when the world was becoming extremely scientific, he belonged to the post-Carlyle-and-Macaulay generation—the school of Oxford and Cambridge inquirers, who sought to reconstruct the past solidly and patiently, with nothing but facts to assist them—pure facts, untwisted by political or metaphysical bias and uncoloured by romance. In this attempt Creighton succeeded admirably. He was industrious, exact, clear-headed, and possessed of a command over words that was quite sufficient for his purposes. He succeeded more completely than Professor Samuel Gardiner, whose history of the Early Stuarts and the Civil Wars was a contemporary work. Gardiner did his best, but he was not an absolute master of the method. Strive as he would, he could not prevent himself, now and then, from being a little sympathetic to one or other of his personages; sometimes he positively alluded to a physical circumstance; in short, humanity would come creeping in. A mistake! For Professor Gardiner's feelings about mankind are not illuminating; and the result is a slight blur. Creighton was made of sterner stuff. In his work, a perfectly grey light prevails everywhere; there is not a single lapse into psychological profundity; every trace of local colour, every suggestion

of personal passion, has been studiously removed. In many ways all this is a great comfort. One is not worried by moral lectures or purple patches, and the field is kept clear for what Creighton really excelled in—the lucid exposition of complicated political transactions, and the intricate movements of thought with which they were accompanied. The biscuit is certainly exceedingly dry; but at any rate there are no weevils in it. As one reads, one gets to relish, with a sober satisfaction, this plumless fare. It begins to be very nearly a pleasure to follow the intrigues of the great Councils, or to tread the labyrinth of the theological theory of indulgences. It is a curious cross-section of history that Creighton offers to the view. He has cut the great tree so near to the ground that leaf and flower have vanished; but he has worked his saw with such steadiness and precision that every grain in the wood is visible, and one can look *down* at the mighty structure, revealed in all its complex solidity like a map to the mind's eye.

Charming, indeed, are the ironies of history; and not the least charming those that involve the historian. It was very natural that Creighton, a clever and studious clergyman of the Church of England, should choose as the subject of his investigations that group of events which, centring round the Italian popes, produced at last the Reformation. The ironical fact was that those events happened to take place in a world where no clever and studious clergyman of the Church of England had any business to be. 'Sobriety,' as he himself said, was his aim; but what could sobriety do when faced with such figures as Savonarola, Cæsar Borgia, Julius II, and Luther? It could only look somewhere else. It is delicious to witness the high-minded husband and father, the clever talker at

Cambridge dinner-tables, the industrious diocesan administrator, picking his way with an air of calm detachment amid the recklessness, the brutality, the fanaticism, the cynicism, the lasciviousness, of those Renaissance spirits. 'In his private life', Creighton says of Alexander VI, 'it is sufficiently clear that he was at little pains to repress a strongly sensual nature. . . . We may hesitate to believe the worst charges brought against him; but the evidence is too strong to enable us to admit that even after his accession to the papal office he discontinued the irregularities of his previous life.' There is high comedy in such a tone on such a topic. One can imagine the father of the Borgias, if he could have read that sentence, throwing up his hands in delighted amazement, and roaring out the obscene blasphemy of his favourite oath.

The truth was that, in spite of his wits and his Oxford training, the admirable North-country middle-class stock, from which Creighton came, dominated his nature. His paradoxes might astound academical circles, his free speech might agitate the lesser clergy, but at heart he was absolutely sound. Even a friendship with that dæmonic imp, Samuel Butler, left him uncorroded. He believed in the Real Presence. He was opposed to Home Rule. He read with grave attention the novels of Mrs. Humphry Ward. The emancipation of a Victorian bishop could never be as that of other men. The string that tied him to the peg of tradition might be quite a long one; but it was always there. Creighton enjoyed his little runs with the gusto and vitality that were invariably his. The sharp aquiline face, with the grizzled beard, the bald forehead, and the gold spectacles, gleamed and glistened, the long, slim form, so dapper in its episcopal gaiters, preened itself delightedly, as an epigram—a devastating epigram—shot



off and exploded, and the Fulham teacups tinkled as they had never tinkled before. Then, a moment later, the guests gone, the firm mouth closed in severe determination; work was resumed. The duties of the day were dispatched swiftly; the vast and stormy diocese of London was controlled with extraordinary efficiency; while a punctual calmness reigned, for, however pressed and pestered, the Bishop was never known to fuss. Only once on a railway journey, when he believed that some valuable papers had gone astray, did his equanimity desert him. 'Where's my black bag?' was his repeated inquiry. His mischievous children treasured up this single lapse; and, ever afterwards, 'Where's my black bag?' was thrown across the table at the good-humoured prelate when his family was in a teasing mood.

When the fourth volume of the *History of the Papacy* appeared there was a curious little controversy, which illustrated Creighton's attitude to history and, indeed, to life. 'It seems to me,' he wrote in the preface, 'neither necessary to moralize at every turn in historical writing, nor becoming to adopt an attitude of lofty superiority over any one who ever played a prominent part in European affairs, nor charitable to lavish indiscriminating censure on any man'. The wrath of Lord Acton was roused. He wrote a violent letter of protest. The learning of the eminent Catholic was at least equal to Creighton's, but he made no complaint upon matters of erudition; it was his moral sense that was outraged. Creighton, it seemed to him, had passed over, with inexcusable indifference, the persecution and intolerance of the medieval Church. The popes of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, he wrote, '... instituted a system of persecution. . . . It is the most conspicuous fact in the

history of the medieval Papacy. . . . But what amazes and disables me is that you speak of the Papacy not as exercising a just severity, but as not exercising any severity. You ignore, you even deny, at least implicitly, the existence of the torture chamber and the stake. . . . Now the Liberals think persecution a crime of a worse order than adultery, and the acts done by Ximenes considerably worse than the entertainment of Roman courtezans by Alexander VI. The responsibility exists whether the thing permitted be good or bad. If the thing be criminal, then the authority permitting it bears the guilt. . . . You say that people in authority are not to be snubbed or sneered at from our pinnacle of conscious rectitude. I really don't know whether you exempt them because of their rank, or of their success and power, or of their date. . . . Historic responsibility has to make up for the want of legal responsibility. Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad.' These words, surely, are magnificent. One sees with surprise and exhilaration the roles reversed—the uncompromising fervour of Catholicism calling down fire from Heaven upon its own abominable Popes and the worldly Protestantism that excused them. Creighton's reply was as Anglican as might have been expected. He hedged. One day, he wrote, John Bright had said, 'If the people knew what sort of men statesmen were, they would rise and hang the whole lot of them' Next day, Gladstone had said 'Statesmanship is the noblest way to serve mankind.' —'I am sufficient of a Hegelian to be able to combine both judgements; but the results of my combination cannot be expressed in the terms of the logic of Aristotle. . . . Society is an organism,' etc. It is clear enough his real difference with Lord Acton was not so much over the place of morals

in history as over the nature of the historical acts upon which moral judgements are to be passed. The Bishop's imagination was not deeply stirred by the atrocities of the Inquisition; what interested him, what appealed to him, what he really understood, were the difficulties and the expedients of a man of affairs who found himself at the head of a great administration. He knew too well, with ritualists on one side and Kensitites on the other, the trials and troubles from which a clerical ruler had to extricate himself as best he could, not to sympathize (in his heart of hearts) with the clerical rulers of another age who had been clever enough to devise regulations for the elimination of heresy and schism, and strong enough to put those regulations into force.

He himself, however, was never a persecutor; his great practical intelligence prevented that. Firmly fixed in the English tradition of common sense, compromise, and comprehension, he held on his way amid the shrieking of extremists with imperturbable moderation. One of his very last acts was to refuse to prosecute two recalcitrant clergymen who had persisted in burning incense in a forbidden manner. He knew that, in England at any rate, persecution did not work. Elsewhere, perhaps, it might be different; in Russia, for instance. . . . There was an exciting moment in Creighton's life when he was sent to Moscow to represent the Church of England at the Coronation of the Emperor Nicholas; and his comments on that occasion were significant. Clad in a gorgeous cope of red and gold, with mitre and crozier, the English prelate attracted every eye. He thoroughly relished the fact; he tasted, too, to the full, the splendour of the great ceremonies and the extraordinary display of autocratic power. That there might have been some degree of

spiritual squalor mixed with those magnificent appearances never seemed to occur to him. He was fascinated by the apparatus of a mighty organization, and, with unerring instinct, made straight for the prime mover of it, the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod, the sinister Pobiedonostzeff, with whom he struck up a warm friendship. He was presented to the Emperor and Empress, and found them charming. 'I was treated with great distinction, as I was called in first. The Empress looked very nice, dressed in white silk.' The aristocratic Acton would, no doubt, have viewed things in a different light. 'Absolute power corrupts absolutely'—so he had said; but Creighton had forgotten the remark. He was no Daniel. He saw no Writing on the Wall.

The Bishop died in his prime, at the height of his success and energy, and was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral. Not far from his tomb, which a Victorian sculptor did his best to beautify, stands the strange effigy of John Donne, preaching, in his shroud, an incredible sermon upon mortality. Linger in that corner, one's mind flashes oddly to other scenes and other persons. One passes down the mouldering street of Ferrara, and reaches an obscure church. In the half-light, from an inner door, an elderly humble nun approaches, indicating with her patois a marble slab in the pavement—a Latin inscription—the grave of Lucrezia Borgia. Mystery and oblivion were never united more pathetically. But there is another flash, and one is on a railway platform under the grey sky of England. A tall figure hurries by, spectacled and bearded, with swift clerical legs, and a voice—a competent, commanding, yet slightly agitated voice—says sharply: 'Where's my black bag?'

E. M. FORSTER

T. S. ELIOT AND HIS  
DIFFICULTIES

It was during the war that I first came across Mr. Eliot's work. It was Egypt, no danger or discomfort; still it was the war, and while waiting for a tram in Cairo I sprained my ankle upon the asphalt pavement and was carried into the garden of a friend. Literature was available. I lay for two or three weeks among the oleanders and bananas, watched from over the wall by a friendly and rakish minaret, and reading whatever was least likely to be bracing. Huysmans's *A Rebours* is the book of that blessed period that I remember best. Oh, the relief of a world which lived for its sensations and ignored the will—the world of des Esseintes! Was it decadent? Yes, and thank God. Yes; here again was a human being who had time to feel and experiment with his feelings, to taste and smell and arrange books and fabricate flowers, and be selfish and himself. The waves of edifying bilge rolled off me, the newspapers ebbed; Professor Cramb, that profound philosopher, and Raemekers, that inspired artist, floated out into an oblivion which, thank God, has since become permanent, and something resembling reality took their place. Perhaps it was not real, but it was not helpful, and in 1917 that was enough to make me repeat after the muezzin on my minaret 'Thank God'. And in the hasty uncritical fashion of those days I tacked on to Huysmans some poems which had come out in a sort of paperish volume from England: 'Prufrock', 'The Portrait of a Lady', and a few more.

The poems were not epicurean; still they were innocent of public-spiritness: they sang of private disgust and diffidence, and of people who seemed genuine because they were unattractive or weak. The author was irritated by tea-parties, and not afraid to say so, with the result that his occasional 'might-have-beens' rang out with the precision of a gong.

I should have been a pair of ragged claws,  
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

Here was a protest, and a feeble one, and the more congenial for being feeble. For what, in that world of gigantic horror, was tolerable except the slighter gestures of dissent? He who measured himself against the war, who drew himself to his full height, as it were, and said to Armadillo-Armageddon 'Avaunt!', collapsed at once into a pinch of dust. But he who could turn aside to complain of ladies and drawing-rooms preserved a tiny drop of our self-respect, he carried on the human heritage. And in all the years that have followed, years in which Mr. Eliot has gone both beyond me and behind, this early fragmentary sympathy has remained, so that still when I read him it is for the witty resentment followed by the pinch of glory.

Yet there the nightingale  
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice  
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,  
'Jug-jug' to dirty ears.

This simple reaction of mine was not unsound. But it was too facile. There was much more in his work than black followed by white. Even the early poems, when studied, revealed crossing shadows, and in time one dis-

cerned blends, or it might be confusions, of colours. Here was a poet whose gesture, whatever its ultimate intention, certainly was not a handshake, and here was a critic who held that a poet does not possess a personality, but is 'only a medium, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways'. Here was a character habitually urbane, but liable to sudden spleen, which was vented on Milton or Hobbes or Mr. Bernard Shaw so as rather to take the breath away. Here, in a word, was a difficult writer. And it is my aim now to sort the difficulties presented by him into two heaps. For though I cannot solve them, into two heaps I am convinced they will go.

One heap—and it is a large one—will contain all those difficulties that are due to our own incompetence or inattention. Mr. Eliot does not write for the lazy, the stupid, or the gross. Literature is to him a serious affair, and criticism not less serious than creation, though severely to be distinguished from it. A reader who cannot rise to his level, and who opens a book as he would open a cigarette case, cannot expect to get very far. There is abundance of beauty and even of amusement awaiting us, there is all the treasure of a richly-stored and active mind, but we are expected to do our share, and if (to take a concrete test) we cannot do it over the little essay in *The Sacred Wood* entitled 'Hamlet and his Problems', it means that we are not up to his standard, and must keep to ready-made stuff. I instance the Hamlet essay because it is both sensitive and lucid (two of Mr. Eliot's great merits), because it handles with amazing skill problems both of historical criticism and of psychology, and because it never attempts to mystify. If we find difficulties here, the fault is ours.

But is the fault always ours? Are there not cases where we turn away because there was no way in? And if our check is due to the writer, why is it that, having set out to address us, he should change his intention, and mislead?

It is natural, at this point of our inquiry, to ask help of the young. For Mr. Eliot's work, particularly *The Waste Land*, has made a profound impression on them, and given them precisely the food they needed. And by 'the young' I mean those men and women between the ages of eighteen and thirty whose opinions one most respects, and whose reactions one most admires. He is the most important author of their day, his influence is enormous, they are inside his idiom as the young of 1900 were inside George Meredith's, they are far better qualified than their elders to expound him, and in certain directions they do expound him. But they are averse to answering leading questions. 'What is *The Waste Land* about?' provokes no enthusiastic reply. Yet it is, to my mind, a pertinent question, and to be told that the poem is simply a poem or just a work of art is unsatisfying. Who is the drowned sailor in it? What does the scrap-heap of quotations at the end signify? Is it helpful, here and elsewhere, to know where the quotations come from? or to read Miss Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, or the other authorities recommended in the notes? No answer comes, or perhaps a sly rejoinder that questions as to Mr. Eliot's meaning are only asked by those who will never understand it, and that his notes are intended for those whom they will lead deeper into confusion. It is implied that if he sees a reader floundering he might amuse himself by setting an additional trap. And I am afraid there is a little truth in this.



There is no reason why a writer should not play tricks on his audience; Samuel Butler and André Gide have done it with success. But it denotes a divided purpose, a shifting of energy, and in Mr. Eliot's case pure love of fun will scarcely be the cause. His is rather the love of the cryptogrammatic. 'I hope,' he says, in his *Homage to John Dryden*, 'that these three papers may, in spite of and partly because of their defects, preserve in cryptogram certain notions which, if expressed directly, would be destined to immediate obloquy, followed by perpetual oblivion.' What is he trying to put across us here? Something which we should dislike and forget. Why, if he believes in it, can he not say it out straight and face the consequences—the very trivial consequences? And not only here, but again and again we have the sense of being outwitted, which is agreeable to the young, who always take a sell in good part, but which nevertheless needs analysing. Whose fault has it been? Into which heap is the difficulty to be thrown? The verse always sounds beautiful, but often conveys nothing. The prose always conveys something, but is often occupied in tracing the boundaries of the unsaid. The more we look into the fabrics, the more intellectual and emotional reservations do we find.

Mr. Eliot is quite frank about this. He admits to the reservations, and he offers an apology for them which we must now examine. Tradition is the keynote of it. An English writer, to be great, must create in the English tradition. He will not, of course, be imitative, and he need not be erudite, but he will acquire the sense of the past, that is to say he will feel the past of Europe present in him while he composes, and within it he will feel the past of England. Such a feeling can only be gained at a price. To acquire tradition, the writer must give up all personal

idiosyncrasies, he must not indulge in private mythologies like Blake or facile reactions like Mr. Arthur Symons; even as a critic he must submit to discipline, while as a creative artist he will engage in 'a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality'. And it will be readily understood that with so much in his bones he cannot speak to the reader as man to man; indeed, while he creates he has ceased to be a man in the hand-shaking sense, he has disassociated himself for the reception of something else, something timeless. Reticence, mental and emotional, is to be expected, and the reader who has likewise the sense of the past will appreciate this, while the reader who has not got it must expect to feel baffled and slighted. This argument, adumbrated in *The Sacred Wood*, has been underlined in *For Lancelot Andrewes*, where it is shown to entail classicism in literature, royalism in politics, and Anglo-Catholicism in religion—none of these three ideals being quite what, in our haste, we might suppose them to be. And the 'uncommon reader' who is further interested is referred to three small volumes which Mr. Eliot has in preparation, and which will be called *The School of Donne*, *The Line of Royalism*, and *The Principles of Modern Heresy*. 5ful

The argument draws a clear line between literary and social tradition, and one has a feeling at moments that the Muses are connected not so much with Apollo as with the oldest county families. One feels, moreover, that there is never all this talk about tradition until it has ceased to exist, and that Mr. Eliot, like Henry James, is romanticizing the land of his adoption. However, criticisms such as these are beside the point. They do not affect the apology, which is a serious one, and which does explain his work. The poems—so novel, startling, subtle, coarse—are not

offered as the product of a private whim. They belong to the succession of Ben Jonson, Marvell, and Donne; they are a protest against the personal raptures of the Lake School. And when they are evasive and when the prose evades, it is because the writer is following an inner rule—some canon of wit, elegance, taste, or Divine Grace, the working of which is not apparent to the indisciplined reader. That is the explanation. When there are difficulties, the fault is always ours.

It is not an explanation under which I propose to sit down. Let me go straight to the heart of the matter, fling my poor little hand on the table, and say what I think *The Waste Land* is about. It is about the fertilizing waters that arrived too late. It is a poem of horror. The earth is barren, the sea salt, the fertilizing thunderstorm broke too late. And the horror is so intense that the poet has an inhibition and is unable to state it openly.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,  
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only  
A heap of broken images.

He cannot say 'Avaunt!' to the horror, or he would crumble into dust. Consequently, there are outworks and blind alleys all over the poem—obstacles which are due to the nature of the central emotion, and are not to be charged to the reader. *The Waste Land* is Mr. Eliot's greatest achievement. It intensifies the drawing-room premonitions of the earlier poems, and it is the key to what is puzzling in the prose. But, if I have its hang, it has nothing to do with the English tradition in literature, or law or order, nor, except incidentally, has the rest of his work anything to do with them either. It is just a personal

comment on the universe, as individual and as isolated as Shelley's *Prometheus*.

In respect to the horror that they find in life, men can be divided into three classes. In the first class are those who have not suffered often or acutely; in the second, those who have escaped through horror into a further vision; in the third, those who continue to suffer. Most of us belong to the first class, and to the elect outside it our comments must sound shallow; they may feel that we have no right to comment at all. The mystics, such as Dostoevsky and Blake, belong to the second class. Mr. Eliot, their equal in sensitiveness, distinct from them in fate, belongs to the third. He is not a mystic. His last volume contains several well-turned compliments to religion and Divine Grace, but no trace of religious emotion. Is he relegating it to another place? No; if it exists, it cannot be relegated. He has not got it; what he seeks is not revelation, but stability. Hence his approval of institutions deeply rooted in the State, such as the Anglican Church, hence the high premium he places upon statesmanship. 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins.' Hence the attempted impersonality and (if one can use the word here) the inhospitality of his writing. Most writers sound, somewhere or other in their scale, a note of invitation. They ask the reader in, to co-operate or to look. Gerard Manly Hopkins is a case in point—a poet as difficult as Mr. Eliot, and far more specialized ecclesiastically, yet however twisted his diction and pietistic his emotion, there is always a hint to the layman to come in if he can, and participate. Mr. Eliot does not want us in. He feels we shall increase the barrenness. To say he is wrong would be rash, and to pity him would be the height of impertinence, but it does seem proper to emphasize the

real as opposed to the apparent difficulty of his work. He is difficult because he has seen something terrible, and (underestimating, I think, the general decency of his audience) has declined to say so plainly.

I have called that terrible thing Armadillo-Armageddon, and perhaps another personal reminiscence may conclude this very personal approach. It is of a bright August morning in 1914. I am lying in bed. The milkman below calls as usual with the milk, and through the clink of the handle against the can I hear him say: 'We've gone in'. This, in its small way, is the kind of experience that must have beset Mr. Eliot, and rooted itself in the soil of his mind. Most of us forget such an experience, or do not feel it acutely. Only here and there does it expand and contort into

The circles of the stormy moon  
Slide westward toward the River Plate,  
Death and the Raven drift above  
And Sweeney guards the horned gate.

MARY F. SANDARS

# THE MELANCHOLY LOVE-STORY OF HONORÉ DE BALZAC AND EVELINE HANSKA

In the year 1830 Honoré de Balzac, after strenuous work and many misfortunes, was, at the age of thirty-one, beginning to taste the joys of success, though, owing to his involved and inelegant style, he was more appreciated in Germany and Russia than in France. The *Physiologie du Mariage*, which had appeared in December 1829, had caused discussion, and discussion brought notoriety. Its cynical tone did not, perhaps, quite tally with Balzac's pretensions to be the champion of women, but in 1830 his admirers read with delight two volumes entitled *Scènes de la Vie Privée*, which contained 'Vendetta', and several other very charming stories.

The world was larger than it is now, events were fewer and therefore more important, and in many an isolated country house the one great excitement of the listless châtelaine, surrounded by an army of servants, was the arrival of a parcel of new books. Mme. Hanska, at Wierzchownia in the far-off Ukraine, did not even possess the anodyne of listlessness, for she was intellectual and active-minded. She was also unsatisfied, with the restlessness of thousands of women in those far-off shackled times.

Born on 24th December 1801, Countess Eveline Rzewuska was one of a large and gifted family with

intellectual traditions, their grandfather having been a friend of Voltaire. The Rzewuskis were also highly connected, Marie Leczinska being their great-aunt, a fact which was to cause Balzac intense satisfaction. Eveline Rzewuska had three brothers, the eldest, Henri Rzewuski, became a very well-known Polish writer, his daughter being married morganatically to the reigning duke Louis of Hesse. The other brothers served in the Russian army, the third brother owning eventually Mme. Hanska's home, Wierzchownia, and having a daughter who became Princess Radzivill and published several novels, while her brother Stanislas wrote *Faustine*, the title-rôle of which was played by Jane Hading. One of Mme. Hanska's sisters was engaged to Sainte-Beuve and married Lacroix, the translator of Sophocles and Shakespeare.

Mme. Hanska was therefore used to intellectual society, and though not so brilliant as most of her family, and described by one of her relatives as rather pedantic, she possessed a solid intellect which made her advice useful to her brothers and sisters, who were rather in awe of her. Her fate was a cruel one, for her parents, being in temporary financial difficulties, married her at the age of nineteen to M. Venceslas de Hanski, the richest man in Poland. This was his only recommendation, as he was twenty-five years older than his wife, and appears to have been a dull man subject to fits of melancholy.

M. de Hanski was not fond of society, and his wife was shut up in a château, the isolation of which may be estimated by the fact that, though it was surrounded by miles of splendid cornfields, they were absolutely un-lucrative, as there were no roads in the neighbourhood.

Worse than all to a woman with the maternal instinct as strongly developed as was Mme. Hanska's, six out of

seven children born to her died, the only one left being the adored and spoilt Anna. The house was full of sad memories, and she turned to literature as a means of forgetfulness. She read Balzac's *Scènes de la Vie Privée* with delight, and was much disappointed when in 1831 they were followed by the *Peau de Chagrin*, which she considered cynical. She was so shocked by its tone, but so interested in the enigmatical personality of a writer equally capable of picturing moral beauty or moral ugliness, that she felt it her duty to guide him into the right way.

She therefore dictated to Henriette Borel, Anna's Swiss governess, the letter which was ultimately to exercise so great an influence, not only on her own life, but on the life and writings of Balzac. The postmark of this letter was Odessa, and it was addressed to Balzac to the care of Gosselin, his editor in Paris.

There must have been something strangely arresting and uncommon in this first letter from l'Étrangère, for Balzac was used to receiving effusions from women, who, after reading his books, looked upon him as their champion. Had not Mme. de Castries, with whom he was now ardently in love, begun her acquaintance with him in the same manner?

Indeed, after Balzac's death, M. Louis Lurine, Vice-President of the Société-des-Gens-de-Lettres, stated that Balzac had received over twelve thousand letters from women.

The first letter from l'Étrangère was, however, unique, and the 28th February 1832, the day he received it, was a date ever memorable in his annals.

The letter has unfortunately been lost, perhaps having been burnt when some of Mme. Hanska's letters were



stolen from Balzac, and after paying a large sum for their return he had destroyed everything written by her.

Therefore, all we know of it is that, while praising the pure delicacy of the *Scènes de la Vie Privée*, l'Étrangère reproached Balzac for forsaking his skilful portrayal of the delicate shades of women's character for a cynicism which degraded their noble rôle in the sight of God. It was certainly unfortunate, as Balzac realized ruefully, that he was on the point of publishing the *Contes Drôlatiques*, which would certainly not satisfy his correspondent.

We do not know how many letters were addressed to Balzac by l'Étrangère, but the only ones which now exist were evidently dictated by Mme. Hanska, as they are not in her handwriting. The second, which is the most interesting, is dated 7th November 1832. Here is an extract from it: 'Reading your works my heart is thrilled; you raise woman to her true dignity; love with her is a celestial virtue, a divine emanation; I wonder at the admirable sensitiveness of soul which has enabled you to divine this. . . . Your career is brilliant, sown with sweet-scented flowers, you should be happy, and will be always.

'When I read your works I identified myself with your genius, your soul seemed luminous to me, I followed you step by step, proud of the praises lavished on you, or weeping when bitter criticism poured upon you its poisoned gall. Nevertheless, several of the criticisms seemed sound to me, and in spite of my admiration for you I trembled.

'I should like to show you the absolute sincerity of my attachment to you, and to prove it by telling you the truth. *Truth*, do you wish for it from an unknown person, who loves you, tells it you, and can tell it?

‘To you I am l’Étrangère, and shall be all my life; you will never know me! . . .’

This last remark was distinctly disappointing, for Balzac was evidently much struck by a correspondent to whom his soul seemed luminous, but at the end of her letter Mme. Hanska relented; thus following her usual programme later, for to shoot one’s arrow into the air becomes, after a time, monotonous, and she longed to know that Balzac had received her letters.

So she finished: ‘A word from you in the *Quotidienne* will assure me that you have received my letter, and that I can write to you without fear. Sign A l’E h B.’

Here Mme. Hanska committed a sin which in any one but the privileged Étrangère would have been unpardonable. She omitted the noble prefix ‘de’ before Balzac’s name, a prefix with which it may be observed he had not started life, and which, therefore, gave occasion for numerous gibes on the part of his enemies. She was rebuked—if she noticed it—by the following answer which appeared in the *Quotidienne* of the 9th December 1832: ‘M. de B. has received the message sent to him, to-day he has only been able to communicate by means of this journal, and regrets not to know where to address his answer.’

Mme. Hanska’s answer and the last letter we possess from her was dated 8th January 1833. It begins:

‘Monsieur, I received with joy the *Quotidienne* in which your note was inserted. I have travelled a great deal since I had the pleasure of writing to you, and hope that at last we shall be settled, at least for a time, nearer France.

‘To my great regret I can only write to you shortly, and yet I have many things to tell you! But I am not always free! Unfortunately I am nearly always in bon-

dage! and! . . . But from now till the end of the month, I hope to secure some moments which will make up to me for the trouble I feel. . . .’

Mme. Hanska had now discovered a way by which Balzac could communicate with her, but her suspicion and alarm were aroused by receiving a letter in answer to one of hers written by Balzac’s faithful friend Mme. Carraud, and naturally of a totally different style and handwriting from his preceding communications. Balzac managed to soothe her about this, and a constant correspondence was exchanged, Mme. Hanska asking a host of questions, not only about Balzac, but about Paris notabilities generally. These Balzac answered to the best of his ability, and though he was not always correct, his letters make amusing reading.

Meanwhile, in her rôle of Egeria, Mme. Hanska sent Balzac—anonymously, of course, but postmarks tell their tale—an *Imitation of Christ*, bound in green morocco, which arrived just as he was writing the *Médecin de Campagne*, in which he attempted to represent a Christlike character. He was enraptured at this coincidence, for he believed in the transmission of thought by sympathy, as he believed in suggestion and magnetism.

Balzac now longed to dedicate something to l’Étrangère, and chose a short story, *l’Expiation*, as suitable, but Mme. de Berny, who had watched over his neglected youth, cheered, helped, and mothered him, and to whom he was eternally grateful, objected to this honour being paid to an unknown woman. He therefore refrained; but in his anxiety to pay a compliment to l’Étrangère, who would, he knew, read *l’Expiation*, a reproduction of the seal she always used was printed at the beginning, and

under it the words, 'Diis ignotis, 25th February 1832', the date of his unknown correspondent's first letter.

Mme. Hanska was doubtless delighted at this charming attention on the part of a writer who was becoming more famous every day. She now told Balzac that 'nearer France meant Neuchâtel', and graciously gave him permission to visit her there. This was welcome news, and on the pretext of visiting paper manufactories for the furtherance of his scheme for a cheap universal library, on 22nd September Balzac left Paris for Neuchâtel.

The Hanski family, with a large number of servants, were already settled in the Villa Andrié, formerly occupied by Chateaubriand, and opposite the Hôtel du Faubourg. Balzac arrived at Neuchâtel on October 2nd and went to the Hôtel du Faucon in the middle of the town. There he found a note from Mme. Hanska, asking him to be on the Promenade du Faubourg the next day between one and four o'clock. He moved at once to the Hôtel du Faubourg.

It has been generally supposed that Balzac's first meeting with Mme. Hanska took place on the Promenade, but what are we to think of the following reminiscence written in a letter to her in 1844?

'Ah! you do not yet know what I felt in that courtyard, the smallest pebbles of which are engraven on my memory, as are the long boards, and the hired carriages, when I saw a face at the window! . . . I felt my body no longer, and when I spoke to you I was as though stupefied. This stupor, this torrent which, in its impetuosity, is retarded in its course only to leap with more force, lasted two days. What must she think of me? was a mad sentence I kept repeating to myself.'

What really happened? Did Mme. Hanska take the

note herself to the Hôtel Faucon? or after Balzac moved to the Hôtel du Faubourg, did she appear alluring and resplendent on the balcony of the villa opposite? We do not know.

They certainly met next day on the Crêt, a hilly promontory which stood out over the lake, and in which the Promenade ended. No doubt Balzac dressed himself with extreme care for the momentous meeting, but refinement of taste was not his strong point; there was always something bizarre about the appearance of the fat little man whose magnificent eyes, lit with the light of genius, were at a cursory glance his sole remarkable feature.

There are different versions of what happened; the most likely being that Mme. Hanska, reading one of Balzac's novels, *La Femme de Trente Ans* has been suggested, saw him in the distance, was so agitated that she let the book fall, and that he rushed to pick it up. From the extract out of the letter written eleven years later, we should picture him paralysed with shyness in Mme. Hanska's presence, but this is hardly like what we know of Balzac, and we cannot doubt that he poured out his most brilliant conversation to fascinate the lady.

In his rapturous letter to his sister, written soon after the meeting, Balzac remarks on Mme. Hanska's 'heart of twenty-seven years'—she was really over thirty—and says that 'She was imprudent enough to throw herself on my neck before everybody'.

Balzac is rather fond of romancing, and we really cannot believe this, for elsewhere he complains that during the time he spent at Neuchâtel, M. de Hanski never once left him and Mme. Hanska, and that the beautiful foreigner with the rich toilettes could not take a step without being observed.

It was only when the Hanskis and Balzac made an expedition to the Val de Travers, close to the enchanting Lac de Biemme, and M. de Hanski had been sent in to order déjeuner, that they exchanged a first furtive kiss under an oak-tree.

‘I will not talk about colossal riches. What are those compared with a *chef d’œuvre* of beauty?’ wrote Balzac to his family.

Money, however, counted for something in all Balzac’s schemes. Were not the heroes of his novels always to have Paris at their feet, which meant that by some means or other they were to become enormously rich? Balzac therefore had found his ideal—beauty, money, and, above all, rank! Mme. Hanska, on the other hand, rejoiced in the company of a genius whose imagination enriched and beautified the most ordinary things of life, and to whom everything was intensely interesting, a welcome change from a bored and melancholy husband.

Balzac and Mme. Hanska met again at Geneva in December of the same year, he escaping from the plaudits of Paris on the appearance of *Eugénie Grandet*. He was a little jealous of this book. ‘It is a masterpiece, I know,’ he said, ‘but a very little one.’

At Geneva a solemn engagement was entered into. M. de Hanski was nearing sixty, and Balzac promised to wait till Mme. Hanska should become a widow, while she swore to keep her heart and hand for him only.

Till this happy event should occur, Mme. Hanska was to remain with her husband and to perform her usual duties.

The Hanskis travelled for two years, and during that time an awkward thing happened. M. de Hanski read one of Balzac’s love-letters to his wife, and the great writer

was obliged to stoop to the lie that the letter was written as a joke, and for a short time to write Mme. Hanska letters that could, if necessary, be shown. M. de Hanski believed Balzac and evidently liked him, for he sent him later a magnificent inkstand, and in the letter which accompanied it hoped that in two years he would become a deputy, and that he would use his talents to improve the world.

In 1835 the Hanskis went to Vienna on their way home, and Balzac, though beset with debts and in the midst of prodigies of work, started in May to meet them there. He could not spare time to be idle, and wrote at Vienna to Mme. Hanska: 'Here then, as in Paris, my life must be in complete disharmony with the life of the world. To find my twelve hours for work I must go to bed at nine o'clock, that I may be able to get up at three o'clock in the morning, and this monastic rule, to which I am forced, governs everything. I have altered for you the rigour of my life, and give myself three hours more than I do in Paris, but that is all I can do.'

Mme. Hanska was certainly not helpful. Balzac did not meet her again for seven years, but he wrote something to her every night and sent off the result at the end of the week. His letters were published posthumously in two large volumes. They are passionate love-letters. He writes: 'You know well that there is in my heart an immense love, that you have power over my heart and life, that if I do not always express this love well to you, nothing will alter it, that it will always flourish, more beautiful, more new, more gracious, because it is a true love, and true love grows always. . . . Oh! how I love you, and what balm this love spreads on me, no trouble is possible! You are my strength; you know that.'

The letters also contain a record—with certain evasions—of Balzac's life. Sometimes he told Mme. Hanska about his other women friends, especially about Mme. de Castries, with whom, before he heard from l'Étrangère, he had fallen violently in love, while she, hoping thus to forget her former lover, the handsome young Metternich, allowed him to start a violent flirtation with her, and then dismissed him, leaving a sore to his vanity which had never healed. There are many references in Balzac's letters to the fact that Mme. de Castries had become old and ugly, which was a great satisfaction to him.

Meanwhile, Mme. Hanska is often nervously suspicious: 'Why do you arm yourself with thoughts of my past life?' he cries. 'Do not punish my beautiful candour. I want you to know all my past because all my future belongs to you. Break your heart! Sacrifice you to any one! You do not know me!' But Mme. Hanska continued to doubt. She was not a trusting girl, but a woman whose social position gave her opportunities of acquaintance with Parisian gossip.

On 8th January 1842 Balzac received a letter from Mme. Hanska with a black seal. Her husband had died on 10th November 1841.

At last Balzac's long time of waiting was over. He wrote: 'As to me, my dear adored one, although this event gives me what I have desired for nearly ten years, I can, before you and God, do myself the justice that I have never had in my heart anything but submission, and that in my most cruel moments I have never soiled my heart with evil wishes. . . . But I understand the regrets you express to me, they seem to me right and natural.'

Nevertheless, Balzac is not quite satisfied. 'I should have liked a few words for me in your letter, and I hunted for



them in vain.' He tries pathetically to magnify himself in her eyes. He will become a deputy when he marries her; he will owe no one anything. His confidence is touching. 'I think of one thing alone,' he writes, 'of this love hoped for during ten years; the star of my darkness, the brightness which has lit me during this long struggle.'

It is fortunate that Balzac could not look into the future and see the long years of uncertainty and anguish, the cruel interruptions to his work which wore out his constitution and eventually killed him.

Meanwhile, though there are no letters to guide us, we guess that a change was taking place in Mme. Hanska's feelings. She may have felt remorse for having deceived the husband who had treated her kindly, and whose loss she regretted. It was, perhaps, this feeling which made her refuse a sum of money he left her in addition to the estates, an action which Balzac called 'false generosity'. It had been pleasant to have a celebrity as lover, but now—why should she be bound by a promise made nearly ten years ago? Why should she—rich and independent—take a step which would put her again into bondage, and this time in a strange country, and to a man who was continually in monetary difficulties and whose want of refinement sometimes jarred upon her?

Mme. Hanska weighed these considerations behind what Balzac called her 'analytical forehead', and wrote Balzac what he called 'a cruel letter'. She reproached him with having gone to Italy instead of coming to see her, though she knew he went there to help the Viscontis—who could not go themselves—to fight a lawsuit at their expense. However, Mme. Hanska was slightly jealous of the Comtesse Emile Guidoboni Visconti, who was an English woman, and it was after this

letter that Balzac began to make violent attacks on the whole nation.

It was doubtless a judicious move on Mme. Hanska's part to blame Balzac. If you are going to treat any one badly, it is wise to put them in the wrong first. She continued her complaints. Her family were horrified that she should think of living in Paris, that terrible city of which her aunt, Comtesse Rosalie Rzewuska, spoke with horror, and she sent Balzac her aunt's letter to impress him.

Then she came to the real difficulty, the question of Anna. Here she hurt Balzac's feelings terribly. 'You tell me,' he said, 'that you owe everything to your daughter, who has been the only person to comfort you, thus implying that I have been nothing to you, when you, you are everything to me. You say that to the person who was telling you to sacrifice everything to Anna at the very time when you were writing these cruel words to him. I will stop, I will not add words which would wound you, though I should like to.' If, he added, she had only said: 'I am like you; I only live for one idea, one desire, one hope, in the depths of our hearts we have the same faith; but we must wait for eighteen months. Remain where you are, for to come here would be to complicate my difficulties. Oh! Dearest, I should have wept about your embarrassments, wept about your anxieties, and have resigned myself to two years' work'. But the terrible words, 'You are free', uttered with glacial tranquillity, were an overwhelming blow.

However, in her usual manner, Mme. Hanska relented to a certain extent. She did not wish to lose Balzac. Therefore, after many hesitations, she gave him permission to visit her in St. Petersburg, where she was going about a

lawsuit. He rushed off at once and arrived there on 17th July 1843.

Mme. Hanska looked to him more beautiful than ever. Nothing definite was settled, for Anna's future was still undecided, and her mother spoke of giving up her own happiness for her daughter. The delay and uncertainty were terrible for Balzac. After his return to Paris he was haunted by his recollections of St. Petersburg. 'What a pleasure to know your bedroom, your drawing-room, your dwelling-place by heart! I walk there, I am there, I see you. Ah! if you were a witness of my ferocious work you would have been sorry to have said "Mon cher Monsieur" to me even in fun, when I am overwhelmed with trouble.' He tries to make Mme. Hanska feel that she is bound to him. He writes in 1844: 'Ah! I have revenged myself a little for Mme. de Castries's atrocious behaviour by saying in a small hypocritical voice "I think I shall have for — (you can fill in the word), a person who is truly pious and attached to her duties, without counting the excessively good opinion she has of me, which I do not deserve in so great a degree as a man of letters, but which I shall justify by my attachment". I would have given anything for you to have seen her expression at the words "pious, and attached to her duties".'

In 1845 Mme. Hanska went to Dresden, where she had promised Balzac that he should come to her, but when she arrived there she could not decide whether she wanted him or not. Dresden was a hotbed of fashionable gossip, and she met, as Balzac told her, 'Princesses who infect and poison your heart'. Being clear-headed but rather cold-hearted, she could realize more easily the impression her lover would make on fashionable society than the torture she was causing him by her vacillations.

Balzac was beginning *Les Paysans*, and could not settle down to it. 'Why do you write that book?' she had said a few months earlier, and he had answered his 'louloup' with the utmost gentleness. Now he cries in despair: 'Dresden and you between you, turn my head; I do not know what will become of me!'

However, on 18th April 1845, she was becoming tired of Dresden, and summoned Balzac. Regardless of books, business arrangements, and bad health, he started rapturously.

The Comtesse Anna and the Comte Georges Mnischez, to whom she had just become engaged, were with Mme. Hanska, and they travelled a party of four to Carlsbad and Strasburg. There they left the Comte, and, to Balzac's intense delight, the mother and daughter went with him incognito to Passy, where he established them in a small house, and conducted them every day to Paris to shop and see the sights. In their company he was naturally at his best, and his intense powers of observation, imagination, and enthusiastic interest in everything, made him a delightful companion. Then he took the ladies back to Brussels, where he left them in the care of Comte Georges Mnischez.

In October he again threw his work to the winds, and travelled with Mme. Hanska and her party in Italy, where he bought pictures and curiosities to adorn their future home. He had thought of 1846 as the latest possible year for marriage, but 1846 had come and nothing was changed except that his continual anxiety; his journeys, his efforts to make up for lost time had undermined his health, and he was now suffering from heart disease. From Italy he returned to work at Paris, and then rushed out again to meet Mme. Hanska and her

party at Wiesbaden. After travelling for a time with them he returned to Paris, and then to Wiesbaden for Countess Anna's marriage to Count Georges Mnischez. Mme. Hanska's much-vaunted principles appear to have been flexible, for—unknown even to the Mnischezs—at Wiesbaden in November 1846, a daughter who did not live was born prematurely to her and Balzac.

Balzac was now passionately anxious for marriage, but Mme. Hanska refused and, to his dismay, for she was not in a good state of health, insisted on accompanying her daughter and son-in-law on their honeymoon.

Balzac tried to console himself by arranging and decorating the house in the rue Fortunée. The reason of the poignant pathos of *Cousin Pons*, in which the old man is obliged to sell all his intensely loved pictures, is that Balzac actually describes his own treasures, and imagines his misery were he to lose them.

The wonderful house in the rue Fortunée, which no one was allowed to enter, and his often deferred marriage with the rich Polish woman, very naturally caused much gossip. Parisians are sometimes clear-sighted. 'Mme. de Girardin tells me,' Balzac wrote to Mme. Hanska, 'that she has heard from someone who knows you very well that you are extremely flattered with my homage, that you make me follow you everywhere from pride and vanity, that you were very glad to have a man of genius as courier, but that your social position is too high to allow me to aspire to anything more. And then she began to laugh with an ironical laugh, and told me I was wasting my time running after great ladies, only to fail with them. Hein! Isn't that like Paris?'

At the beginning of 1847 Balzac was permitted to bring her back from Germany to Paris, while the

Mniszechs proceeded to Wierzchownia. He returned to find his work in confusion and his business engagements unfulfilled. But what did such things matter if he could be with Mme. Hanska! Once on his way to the Ukraine he had travelled eight days and nights in succession without stopping.

He was delighted with Wierzchownia which, with his usual exaggeration, he told his family, was as large as the Louvre, though in reality it contained about thirty rooms. He had a delightful suite of three rooms (bedroom, study, and drawing-room). But he was still in uncertainty. He writes to his sister: 'My greatest desire will not be accomplished soon. Mme. Hanska is indispensable to her children. She has given everything to her daughter, I have known this since St. Petersburg.'

This daughter was, moreover, a most wonderful person, and Balzac's niece Sophie, who played the piano very well, was admonished not to think of rivalling the young Countess, who had a genius for music, and besides was profoundly educated without being pedantic, was most religious, respectful to her mother—did Sophie and Valentine fail in this?—was gay and simple and altogether charming.

In February Balzac was obliged to return to Paris, as the Chemin de Fer du Nord, in which he had invested money, was in evil plight, and it was necessary to raise money to meet the calls made on its shareholders. Though he was a dying man, none of his friends could have believed it. The favoured ones who were allowed to visit him in the rue Fortunée were struck by his vivacious talk and laughter, and considered him in good health and perfect spirits. Unfortunately, arriving in Paris just before the Revolution of 1848, he was nearly starved.

He was also worried in spite of his apparently good spirits, for Mme. Hanska had had a miscarriage which made her more doubtful than ever about the marriage; and he was afraid that she might find another pretext for postponement in the fact that, owing to the Revolution, Balzac had lost sixty thousand francs, while the estate of Wierzchownia was not in a flourishing condition.

On his return to Wierzchownia in 1848, Balzac was not only agitated, but very ill. While there he was attended by two Polish doctors who tried the unsuccessful experiment of feeding him with lemon juice.

Mme. Hanska's behaviour at this time is curious. She, as well as her daughter and son-in-law, were continually with the sick man, yet she says later in a letter to Mme. Mnischech that it is awkward that she knows nothing of what the doctors have prescribed for Balzac, as the French physicians are sure to ask. This want of responsibility about the man she thought of marrying is surprising. Perhaps she did not want the doctors' verdict, for she must have known that Balzac was dying.

At last Mme. Hanska promised definitely to marry him, and the wedding took place on 14th March 1850 at the church of St. Barbe at Berditcheff.

At the end of April the newly married couple started for Paris. The journey was terrible, the road to Dresden being in so bad a state that the carriage fell several times into mud-holes, from which fifteen or sixteen men were required to pull it out; and the journey took three weeks instead of four or five days.

At Dresden Mme. Hanska bought a magnificent pearl necklace and wrote to her daughter about it, but only casually mentioned of her husband. However, in another letter from Dresden (*L'Intermédiaire des Chercheurs et*

*Curieux*, 30th Nov. 1912), written early in May, she says: 'My husband has returned; he has attended to all his business with remarkable activity, we are leaving to-day. I had not realized what an adorable person he is. I have known him for seventeen years, and every day I perceive some new quality in him I did not know of. It is such happiness to be loved and protected thus.' (Why did not Mme. Hanska think of this sooner?) 'If he could only regain his health! Speak to Dr. Knothe about it, I beg you. You have no idea how he suffered last night! I hope his native air will help him, but if this hope fails me I shall be much to be pitied, I assure you. His eyes are very bad; I do not know what that means, and at times I am very sad. I hope to give you better news to-morrow.'

The failing sight was not a new symptom, as we might suppose from this mention of it. Balzac speaks about it in letters to his family from Wierzchownia, and says that Mme. Hanska is reading his letters to him. She is here, as in many other instances, a mystery.

In his visions of at last bringing his wife home to the glories of the house he had prepared for her, Balzac had always pictured it full of flowers, and he had written now to say that Mme. Honoré's room was to be decorated with 'beautiful, beautiful flowers'. It was to be a joyful homecoming, but everything now was going wrong with Balzac. He and his wife arrived in the evening tired out at the house in the rue Fortunée. It was brilliantly lit, but in vain did they ring at the courtyard gate.

A locksmith was sent for, and at last they entered the house. It was prepared as though for some gorgeous reception, but no one appeared to welcome them, and it was discovered that François, Balzac's faithful servant, had been so agitated by the approaching arrival and the



many directions he had received, that he had gone suddenly mad.

Balzac lived for three months longer, still striving to finish the *Comédie Humaine*, and even hoping that fever would find him fictitious strength. He died at half-past eleven o'clock in the evening of Sunday, 17th August 1850.

Victor Hugo went to see him a few hours earlier, and a woman came in weeping: 'He is dying, Madame has gone to her own rooms,' she said. Hugo was taken upstairs, where he found Balzac lying unconscious. His mother, the nurse, and a servant were watching beside his bed.

Balzac was buried on 20th August at the church of Sainte-Philippe-du-Roule, Victor Hugo making an oration over his grave.

Would Balzac and his wife have been happy together? Mme. de Balzac had shown long ago that her convenience must come before his work, she did not share his enthusiasm for his treasures, and he often jarred on her by his fondness for talking about her titled relatives: 'We take these things as a matter of course,' she would say coldly. She would doubtless have tired of Balzac's bourgeois relatives, and of his unconventional and decidedly uncomfortable life.

But one question makes the reader wonder. Did she ever intend to lead Balzac's life? Did she know he was dying when she married him? Did she look forward to being the widow of a man of genius?

Her contemporaries, judging her feelings for Balzac by her apparent indifference to his sufferings caused by the postponement of the marriage, thought she exaggerated a little when she wrote brokenhearted letters after his death, and said: 'I have lived through a hell of suffering'.

first letter to Mme. Hanska. With this the cobbler was preparing to light his pipe, but he became interested in the search, and brought the Vicomte hundreds of precious papers.

In the *Journal des Goncourts* we read: 'The hunt was amusing because, in the scattering of the correspondence, the Vicomte would discover in a shop the end of a letter the beginning of which he had found in the shop next door'.

Such was the fate of Balzac's beautiful house filled with treasures he had taken years to collect for his 'pre-dilecta'.

Wierzchownia passed into the hands of Mme. de Balzac's youngest brother, and Mme. Georges Mnischev found refuge in the Convent Vaugirard, where she died in September 1914 at the age of eighty-nine.

K. T. MASSON

## FEAR AND THE LITTLE GIRL

'Who would like to go to the fête?' says a mid-Victorian papa with moustaches, in grey, with a flower in his button-hole, walking gaily across the lawn called the See-Saw lawn, where four children are playing: a big and a little girl in calico sun-bonnets and strap shoes, and two small boys in sailor suits.

The lawn has a romantic fernery where fritillaries grow—elfin flowers, the little girl thinks, whose spotted bells are rung by the fairies—many shrubs with blue berries to play greengrocer's shop with, and in its centre a triumphantly dangerous see-saw, on which one rides seated, grasping a stake at either end, or standing, legs apart, in the middle. How often does the little girl cry 'Don't let me down bump!' to some cruel cousin, and then feel the devastating yet thrilling bump shake her from stern to stem. 'Go to the fête? Oh! yes, yes!' cry the children, crowding round Papa. Mamma has her hand through his arm—she wears a blue frock spotted with white, and an edge of stiff collar shows at her neck; a row of tiny buttons curves down her bosom. When will the little girl have that admired curve, she thinks, feeling her little straight pinafore? . . .

'Do you think it is a fit place for children, Theo?' says Mamma, placidly. Mamma is always placid. 'They'll love it,' says Papa; 'roundabouts, Aunt Sally, coconut-shies, swinging-boats.' 'Oh! I must go in a boat that swings,' thinks the little girl. 'Yes, yes!' they all shriek, jumping up and down; 'do let us go to the fête'. 'Well, Mary must

take you,' says Mamma, and the little girl is less pleased, for she dislikes Mary the nursemaid, her rough, red hands, the tickling bows she makes of a silk scarf which she ties beneath the chin of the little girl, who abhors silk scarves as she abhors having her hair cropped short as a boy by odious Mr. Davis, or being called Jack Sheppard by silly old Colonel Atkinson. 'Here 's half a crown for each of you to spend,' says Papa, always a radiant presence of Bounty—a Treat-giver—and off they all go down the garden path, under the elder-arch, past the swing, between the gooseberry and currant bushes, through the little green gate. Mary the nursemaid is in front, the red hands hidden in brown cotton gloves—with Clara, aged eleven, solemn and pudgy—her sedate, middle-aged legs looking as if they would never run or dance or jump, as, indeed, they never could, and on Mary's other hand Ronald, jumping, springing, talking, and behind them the little girl and little brother, silently, deeply excited. They go along the familiar road with its homely Middlesex hedges, past the old apple orchard, and the forbidden field where there is a mysterious pond of deep dark green water, pale crowfoot floating on it, up the hill to the bridge, where the road narrows, and there is a jangling procession of slow coal-carts, with hoarse cries of drivers, and the pert jingling of butchers' carts. Then jog, jog, down the hill the children go, till they come to Atkins's big field; but its aspect is changed since the little girl looked through the bars of the white gate a few weeks ago at the ox-eye daisies and quaking grass and ragged robin. Now, the gate stands wide open, the grass is nothing but a rough stubble, with great ruts made by the wheels of caravans, and a man without a collar sits at a table taking the pennies of many people passing in. Full and harsh on

the little girl's ear strikes the insistent rattle and beat of a jig-tune, a confused din of coarse voices shouting and laughing, neighing of horses, and, above all, the violent high shriek of a whistle. The sky is a fierce, hot blue, the trees are heavy and motionless against the blue, like dark green sponges. The little girl and little brother stumble forward over the rough ground strewn with paper and orange-peel and crushed wild flowers, and bruised, pretty red rose-buds. Mary and the others are just ahead, gaping round them—the little girl keeps them carefully in the tail of her eye while she looks on the lanes of glittering stalls full of brassy things, of gaudy lustre-ware, magenta and yellow—shall she buy a bright mug? She sees behind the stall an old fat woman with an incredibly broad face, black pig's eyes, her handkerchief very white against her coffee-coloured neck, and the little girl thinks of a fat, brown slug, of black treacle, and she turns away, and begins—she begins to feel Fear. 'Let's buy some sweets,' says little brother; 'look here, what jolly ones!'; and he stops at a stall where there is black hardbake with great white nuts, rich bars of nougat, striped brown peppermints, black sticks of liquorice, pink and white coco-nut, all brilliant and tempting, and he buys hardbake for the little girl and pink coco-nut for himself.

They go on from stall to stall to where the merry-go-round whirls in violent, shrieking circle, the grotesque spotted horses going up and down as well as round and round. The sky is fiercer in its glare—the clamour of the insistent jig-tune—one, two, three, four—one, two, three, four—hits the little girl's head, blow upon blow. She smells people, over-ripe fruit, horses, cooking. Mary and Ronald mount horses, Clara gets in one of the cars reserved for the less bold spirits; they wave their hands,

and away they go, slow, then faster, whirling to the tune of the raucous jig. 'You stop here till we get off,' calls out Mary. But the little brother says, 'We'll just go to find the coco-nut shies and come back here for them—the coco-nut shies are what I want,' and the little girl follows him—as she always does. They go in and out of the stalls, wander here and there in a vain search, till at last they come to an open space where are horses unharnessed, bright yellow caravans daubed with red, some playing gipsy children, tents, clothes hung out. On the steps of a caravan a young woman sits with a baby in her arms. Her great black eyes look out far away at nothing, her lips are thick and red, her hair hangs in oily corkscrew curls round her ears, in which are brass rings, and she feeds her child, her bodice unfastened, and her brown breast quite bare. The universe rocks for the little girl—Fear—Fear increases, and nausea—'Are women made like that?'—She feels her straight little frock—'not yet, not yet'. That ripe, brown globe—the baby's greedy mouth—she turns away in sickened horror. 'This way, this way, brother, we may find the coco-nut shies.' But no! they pull up before an unhorsed, shabby chaise, drawn into a patch of shade, in which lies a man not like the gipsies, with grey face, grey hair, in black clothes, and from head to foot he is shaking, twitching, jerking—head, mouth, eyes, fingers, feet—not a moment's respite. At the sight of him the little girl's Fear reaches its culminating point. The din and merriment of the fête which shriek on while this happens are too brutal a contrast. Each impression she has received—the brown slug of an old woman, harsh rattle of pence in a tin pail, the merry-go-round, the mother suckling her child, smell and press of people, violent, brassy colours, burning sky, strewn, filthy

ground—goes to paint an indelible scene on her brain. A dog comes from the tent and barks, a rough girl steps over to the man and tries to raise his head, and Bernard drags the little girl away. ‘Don’t cry,’ he says, shocked, wiping her face with his pink-bordered handkerchief. ‘Some one will see you—fancy crying—we’ll go and find Mary and the others,’ for he is tired and Fear has him, too.

Mary and the others are not at the roundabout, not at the swinging-boats; oh! cruel, giddy things, one end up, the other down, the whole high, high, in the air, while a rough girl and boy pull at thick, woolly ropes, like woolly-bear caterpillars. Up and down, to and fro they go, to the wild shriek of the merry-go-round, still whirling, whirling. The little girl’s head throbs, and she has a terrible sense of being lost with brother in an alien world of horror, for Mary and the others have disappeared—they are swallowed up in the fête. How are the two to venture home alone, when they have never been allowed without nurse or guardian, on the high road before? And there will be Mary’s anger to face later, for stealing away when she told them to wait for her at the roundabouts. But little brother takes the little girl in charge, and he quietens her, and goes bravely with her out of the horrible fête on to the high road. It is a great adventure. Now they are on the bridge, with its clanging coal-carts and slashing whips, and ‘gee-ups’, now running between the kind, familiar hedges, now crossing—‘There is Mrs. Barwell,’ says the little girl, as a slender, faded lady, her head drooping on her long neck like a flower, waves a surprised kid glove to them from a victoria—‘she’ll tell Mamma’. ‘Oh, not for ages, anyhow,’ says brother, and at last they are through the green gate, in the beautiful green garden world again—the world of butterflies and flowers, and sunshine, of Papa and Mamma.

Still the echo of the fête can be heard there—faint, distant, yet audible. . . .

Now the little girl is a little girl no longer—brother and the green, peaceful garden have long been swept away on Time's stream—but she thinks often of the fête where the first notes of Fear, of Horror, sounded with such strength; Fear of the Animal, the Unknown, of the mysteries of Motherhood and of Pain; Horror at cruelly-wounded senses, at the eternal discord of life.



GEORGE SANTAYANA

## PROUST ON ESSENCES

'No novelist,' writes Mr. Desmond MacCarthy, 'has ever done such complete justice (as has Proust) to the great fact that all things pass and change.' Yet this complete absorption in the flux of sensations, and abstention from all judgements about their causes or their relative values, leads Proust in the end to a very remarkable perception: that the flux of phenomena is after all accidental to them, and that the positive reality in each is not the fact that it appears or disappears, but rather the intrinsic quality which it manifests, an eternal essence which may appear and disappear a thousand times. Such an essence, when it is talked about, may seem mysterious and needlessly invented, but when noticed it is the clearest and least doubtful of things—the only sort of thing, indeed, that can ever be observed with direct and exhaustive clearness. An essence is simply the recognizable character of any object or feeling, all of it that can actually be possessed in sensation or recovered in memory, or transcribed in art, or conveyed to another mind. All that was intrinsically real in past time is accordingly recoverable. The hopeless flux and the temporal order of things are not ultimately interesting; they belong merely to the material occasions on which essences recur, or to the flutterings of attention, hovering like a moth about lights which are eternal.

A beautiful and impassioned confession of this discovery will be found in the last volume of Proust's great work,

the second of *Le Temps Retrouvé*, pp. 14-23. Speaking of the vivid recovery of things long past, he says:

Ces diverses impressions bienheureuses . . . avaient entre elles ceci de commun, que je les éprouvais à la fois dans le moment actuel et dans un moment éloigné . . . L'être qui alors goûtait en moi cette impression la goûtait en ce qu'elle avait de commun dans un jour ancien et maintenant, dans ce qu'elle avait d'extra-temporel, un être qui n'apparaissait que . . . dans le seul milieu où il pût vivre, jouir de l'essence des choses, c'est à dire, en dehors du temps. . . . Cet être là n'était jamais venu à moi, ne s'était jamais manifesté, qu'en dehors de l'action, de la jouissance immédiate, chaque fois que le miracle d'une analogie m'avait fait échapper au présent. Seul il avait le pouvoir de me faire retrouver les jours anciens, le Temps Perdu, devant quoi les efforts de ma mémoire et de mon intelligence échouaient toujours. . . . J'avais pu trouver le monde et la vie ennuyeux parce que je les jugeais d'après des souvenirs sans vérité, alors que j'avais en tel appetit de vivre maintenant qui venait de renaître en moi . . . un véritable moment du passé.

Rien qu'un moment du passé? Beaucoup plus, peut-être: quelque chose qui, commun à la fois au passé et au présent, est beaucoup plus essentiel qu'eux deux.

L'être qui était rené en moi . . . ne se nourrit que de l'essence des choses, en elle seulement il trouve sa subsistance, ces délices. . . . Qu'un bruit, qu'une odeur, déjà entendu et respirée jadis le soient de nouveau, à la fois dans le présent et dans le passé, réels sans être actuels, idéaux sans être abstraits, aussitôt l'essence permanente et habituellement cachée des choses se

trouve libérée et notre vrai moi . . . s'éveille, s'anime en recevant la céleste nourriture qui lui est apportée. . . . Cette contemplation, quoique d'éternité, était fugitive. Et pourtant je sentais que le plaisir qu'elle m'avait donné à des rares intervalles dans ma vie, était le seul qui fût fécond et véritable. Le signe de l'irréalité des autres ne se montre-t-il pas assez, soit dans leur impossibilité à nous satisfaire . . . soit dans la tristesse qui suit leur satisfaction? . . . Aussi cette contemplation de l'essence des choses, j'étais maintenant décidé à m'attacher à elle, à la fixer. . . . Et si je faisais la recapitulation des déceptions de ma vie, en tant que vécue, qui me faisait croire que sa réalité devait résider ailleurs qu'en action . . . je sentais bien que la déception du voyage, la déception de l'amour, n'étaient pas des déceptions différentes, mais l'aspect varié qui prend, selon le fait auquel il s'applique, l'impuissance que nous avons à nous réaliser, dans la jouissance matérielle, dans l'action effective.

No wonder that a sensibility so exquisite and so voluminous as that of Proust, filled with endless images and their distant reverberations, could be rescued from distraction only by finding certain repetitions or rhymes in this experience. He was a tireless husbandman of memory, gathering perhaps more poppies than corn; and the very fragility and worthlessness of the weeds collected may have led him to appreciate their presence only when lost, and their harsh scent only when recovered. Thus he required two phenomena to reveal to him one essence, as if essences needed to appear a second time in order to appear at all. A mind less volatile and less retentive, but more concentrated and loyal, might easily have discerned

the eternal essence in any single momentary fact. It might also have felt the scale of values imposed on things by human nature, and might have been carried towards some by an innate love and away from others by a quick repulsion: something which in Proust is remarkably rare. Yet this very inhumanity and innocent openness, this inclination to be led on by endlessly rambling perception, makes his testimony to the reality of essences all the more remarkable. We could not have asked for a more competent or a more unexpected witness to the fact that life as it flows is so much time wasted, and that nothing can ever be recovered or truly possessed save under the form of eternity which is also, as he tells us, the form of art.

That Proust was endowed with a great power of intuition appears also in his style, since an adequate rendering of intuition in words must necessarily be diffuse and many-sided, and must invite to many a postscript and much reconsideration. The evanescent and immediate cannot be defined or traced or analyzed: it must be re-evoked by suggestion. And here a scrupulous psychological critic might express a doubt: Is it likely that any given essence should be ever re-evoked exactly? Doubtless, similar events often recur: the same bell strikes the same hours, and the old head shakes in the same old way. But the observer is seldom or never in exactly the same mood, or capable of an intuition equally keen and pure. The repetition of similar events is common: the recurrence of a given essence in a living mind is rare, and perhaps impossible. Much iteration of the stimulus may, indeed, be requisite before there is any relevant intuition at all. How many times may we not hear, or even repeat, a phrase, before its meaning flashes upon us? How many years may we not be daily passing a monument, before its

proportions and composition are at last perceived? The earlier impressions may not have been wholly wasted: they may have prepared the ground, and may help to deepen and fix the intuition when it comes at last. But the persuasion that this new intuition is not new, and that we have had it in exactly this form before, is probably an illusion; the well-known illusion of the *déjà-vu*. In any case, the mere feeling of recognition is no evidence of recurrence: on the contrary, the fact that two terms are compared and identified in intuition proves of itself that they are both given at once: and if a long-lost instance of this given essence seems to have lodged before in some past moment, the reason lies in the mechanism of memory, of belief, and of arrested reaction. The essence attributed to the past moment must be given now, else it could not be attributed. It is not found by inspection in two facts of different dates—something psychologically impossible—and then abstracted from them. It is given spontaneously, in the present flow of sensibility, as in a waking dream: and it seems to be reduplicated only because it is attributed both to a present and to a past object, conceived to exist apart.

The important point, however, is not how intuition is reached, but that when reached it reveals an essence belonging of itself neither here nor there, but undated and eternal. Such essences are set over against existence everywhere and at all times, and it remains for existence, if it will, to embody their forms or to give attention to them, so that they may become evident to living spirits. And a living spirit finds a great joy in conceiving them, not because they are all beautiful or true, but because in conceiving them it is liberated from the pressure of ulterior things, energizes perfectly, and simply conceives.

## A NOTE FOR COLLECTORS

The speculator in modern first editions, like any other gambler, endeavours to buy cheap and to sell dear. He must keep a watchful eye on the market, or he may fail to notice the sudden rise of Shaw, or the silent sagging of Hudson. He must listen carefully to all the gossip of the book-world, or he will fail to get in on the ground-floor of the next boom. It is useless to buy Galsworthy at prohibitive prices; the essence of the game is to know that it has been decided that Wells is the next author to be inflated among the guileless Americans. A certain gift of literary intuition is valuable to the collector. He must not pay too much attention to the insidious chatter of high-brow critics. If he is convinced that Chelsea is always right he will probably lose his money. Nor is it safe to grab at the one good book which we are told that everybody can write. If he aims too high at Aldous Huxley, or too low at Michael Arlen, he will not succeed. It is Galsworthy who wins. Also he must be patient. The book-sellers' 100 per cent profit has to be worked off before the collector's can be made. The true collector must have the courage to hold on for the rise.

It is encouraging to consider the big profits that within the last few years a careful and judicious buyer can have made. Mr. Bernard Shaw's first book, *Cashel Byron's Profession*, was published for a shilling in its paper wrappers in 1886. As lately as 1922 it could be picked up for fifteen shillings. It is now worth £200. His second book, *An Unsocial Socialist*, 1887, has during the same period

risen from £5 to £150, and the two volumes of *Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant*, 1898, from £2 5s. to £50. A similar sensational rise has taken place in the values of Mr. Galsworthy's rare books. *From the Four Winds*, 1897, could be bought a few years ago for £5; it is now worth £100. The same figures apply to *Villa Ruben*, 1900, and *The Man of Property*, 1906. *The Man of Devon*, 1901, has risen from £9 to £200. It is true, of course, that there is often some obscure 'point' to trip up the unwary. He who buys *Villa Ruben*, for instance, must be as sensitive to colour as a woman. He must know the difference between cherry-coloured and wine-red covers, even without the opportunity of seeing them together.

Sir J. M. Barrie's *Better Dead*, published in yellow boards for a shilling in 1888, has always been rare, and is generally in bad condition. A fair copy can be sold for £100. But the three volumes of *The Little Minister*, 1891, could not long ago be picked up for £1; it is now worth £200. Mr. Kipling's rare pamphlets have always fetched high prices in America, and he is a bold man who sets out to collect an author whose bibliography records over five hundred publications. But his commoner works appeared till recently to be on everybody's shelves, and £3 3s. would have seemed a good price to pay for the two blue volumes of *The Jungle Book*. They are now worth £50.

Obviously, such easy opportunities of profit do not come every day. The secret of successful collecting is to concentrate upon the rare books of your chosen author. First select your author, and be convinced of his inevitable value. Then find out which are his rare books, and make sure that they are rare. Never for instance, be led away by the noise of a booming market into paying £15

for Mr. Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*, of which 10,000 copies were printed. But if the book is genuinely rare, do not be afraid to pay what seems at the time even an absurd price. A good example of this is the first published work of Lionel Johnson. A thin quarto in wrappers, printed in Chester in 1885, it is called *Sir Walter Raleigh in the Tower*, and with it young Johnson won the Queen's gold medal for English verse at Winchester. Seldom as it ever appears, this pamphlet was last Christmas offered by a bookseller to an ardent collector of the Catholic poet for £30. Naturally he hesitated before the enormity of the price, but, knowing that everything else of Johnson's can be got at any time for next to nothing, he decided to buy it. Last week it fetched £160 at auction.

The moral of the story is that if the collector is brave enough to face a stiff price he should neglect the commoner works of the author and buy the rare ones. For it is the latter that get scarcer every day, that feel the first effects of a boom, and it is there that the big profits are made. If, for instance, the collector fancies Mr. Aldous Huxley, he must concentrate upon obtaining *Jonah* in wrappers, a little volume of poems printed anonymously at Oxford in 1917. It will cost him £20. Mr. Maurice Baring's first book, *Damozel Blanche and other Faery Tales*, in wrappers, printed at Eton in 1891, costs £16. Mr. Arnold Bennett's first book, *A Man from the North*, 1898, is still cheap. His most expensive book, *The Old Wives' Tale*, 1908, is already £75. The most profitable purchase of this author would be the three volumes of *Things which have Interested Me*, of which 100 copies of each were privately printed at Burslem in 1906, 1907, and 1908. There are two interesting things about these volumes. Firstly, the contents are completely different from the two volumes of the same



name published by Mr. Bennett in 1921 and 1923. Secondly, the first volume of the series is called *Things that Interested Me*, and the succeeding ones *Things Which have Interested Me*. Was Mr. Bennett improving his grammar or his title? Lord Morley used to say that the use of 'that' and 'which' was the test of English writing.

The admirers of Mr. Blunden will not find his rarities expensive. Three of them, *The Harbingers*, *The Barn*, and *Three Poems*, were privately printed at Uckfield in 1916, and the other, *Old Homes*, was privately printed in 1922. They are not easy to find. Mr. Siegfried Sassoon, on the other hand, is the despair of collectors. He has printed privately at least a dozen little books, each of which may cost something in the neighbourhood of £15. Of *Recreations*, for instance, only 75 signed copies were printed, of *Lingual Exercises for Advanced Vocabularians* only 99, and of *Morning Glory* only 11. Most of these small paper volumes were printed by the Chiswick Press between 1906 and 1912, long before Mr. Sassoon made his name by the bitterness of his war poems, and the collector who despairs of discovering which is the real first issue of the *Memoirs of a Fox-hunting Man*, may profitably turn his attention to *Orpheus in Diloeryum*, privately printed in 1908.

Mr. Gordon Bottomley's first book, *The Mickle Drede*, 1896, only costs £6 6s. His second, *Poems at White-Nights*, 1899, is also rare and cheap. The rarest, but by no means the dearest, of Rupert Brooke's works is *Lithuania*, published in Chicago in 1915. Mr. W. H. Davies's first book, *The Soul's Destroyer*, he himself printed in the Marshalsea Road round about 1907, and it will cost the collector some £10. Mr. Drinkwater's first book of poems, printed at Birmingham in 1903, costs at least £10. Mr. Ralph Hodgson's works are all rare, costing between £5 and

£10, especially the large paper volume of *Eve*, printed by Flying Fame in 1913, with coloured illustrations, and the *Hymn to Moloch*, 1921. Mr. Somerset Maugham's rare book, *Of Human Bondage*, was published as lately as 1915, and costs £12. Synge's first two plays, *In the Shadow of the Glen*, 1904, and *The Well of the Saints*, 1905, were published by Quin in New York. Only 50 copies of each were printed, and it would be a lucky buyer who paid less than £10 for either of them. Francis Thompson's *Songs Wing-to-Wing*, afterwards published as *Sister-Songs*, was privately printed in 1895, and costs £30. Mr. Yeats is responsible for several rare books. His *Tables of the Law*, 110 copies privately printed in 1897, is worth £10, and about the same price would have to be paid for *The Golden Helmet*, of which Quin printed 50 copies in New York in 1908. Mr. Yeats's rarest book is *Musado*, 1886, which if it appeared in the auction room would run to many hundreds, but one of the ten copies of *Where There is Nothing*, printed by Lane in 1912, is almost as hard to find and far cheaper. On the other hand, Mr. Gibson's first book of verses, printed at Cambridge in 1900, Mr. Shane Leslie's *Songs of Oriel*, printed in Dublin in 1908, Mr. Squire's *Socialism and Art*, 1907, and Mr. Sturge Moore's *The Vinedresser*, 1899, all difficult books to find, can be bought for a few shillings.

It may seem strange that a modern book should ever, unless very few copies were originally printed, become really rare. The reasons, alas, are not far to seek. Take the works of Mr. Norman Douglas, now eagerly sought after by many collectors. His *Unprofessional Tales* under the pseudonym of Normyx, published in 1901, is worth £20. Seven hundred and fifty copies were printed, and the large majority were 'pulped' unsold. Ten years elapsed, and in

1911 Mr. Douglas published *Siren Land*. It is now worth £10. Out of the 1,500 copies printed, 890 were 'pulped' unsold. It was not until 1917 that *South Wind* made the name of Mr. Norman Douglas known throughout the world. The first issue of that book, with the transposed lines at the top of page 335, is worth £20. Immediately a demand sprang up for his earlier books, and the publishing world was busily engaged reprinting the very books they had 'pulped', while the collectors were obliged to pay high prices for the rarities so artificially and accidentally produced.

One other 'point' in Mr. Douglas's books may serve to close these random notes. The first issue of *Alone*, 1921, is very rare. On p. 140, the following postscript is added to the close of a chapter: 'When in Rome, avoid the "Fine Champagne" at the Hotel ——. It is a scandal that one of the best hotels in Europe should sell such poison—at ten francs a thimbleful'. The sensitive hotel-managers complained of the early copies, and the issue was suppressed. Even now, I dare not fill in the name omitted in the blank.

## READERS' REPORTS

### THE DREAM AND THE BUSINESS

I have more than once, in the course of these reviews, had occasion to remark that the criminal, and in particular the murderer, of detective fiction does not, and should not attempt to resemble the criminal of real life. At first sight, this may seem to present a dilemma. Is one not inconsistent, in criticising continually detective novels for having 'unreal' characters, while at the same time saying that there is no place in them for 'real' criminals? The inconsistency, however, is more apparent than actual, for there are, in fact, at least two middle courses between stark realism, the realism, say, of Tolstoy, or that Dougal whose confession recently appeared in *Life and Letters*, and the characters of whom one says instantly, 'But these are impossible sticks!' These two courses may be called, one, the course of colourable imitation, and the other the course of true day-dreams. The colourable imitation is easy enough to understand; he forms most of the stock-in-trade of the regular fiction-writer. He has no real existence, but he has the outward and visible form of a man, the preoccupations and conversation of a man, and in a novel which is not taking itself too seriously he does just as well as the real thing. He is, in fact, to a 'real' character what ordinary 'good' novel dialogue is to actual human conversation; and any one who has ever tried to turn a novel into a play knows how far these are apart, how *unspeakable* (in the literal sense) is dialogue which when written looks perfectly natural.

This character, as I say, is easy to grasp; the 'true day-dream' is more difficult, though it is he who is the basis

of most fictional murderers, and some, at any rate, of fictional heroes. His existence comes from the fact that, whereas few of us have had the fortune to know in life a murderer or a bandit or an enemy of the human race, we have all dreamed stories in which such persons appear and know, more or less, what they were like in our dream. Whether we call a fictional murderer 'plausible' or 'impossible' depends on how far he corresponds to our dream-vision of him; and, naturally, the more sophisticated the dreamer the more difficult he is to satisfy in this respect. The upper grades of the Civil Service do not day-dream of villains with huge moustaches, who hiss 'Grr-r-r!' in their throats, and when they see such a one in a book they say 'Preposterous!' Their day-dream of a murderer is something very different—but equally unlike the murderer who is brought to justice in real courts.

This month's bag of novels provides a very good illustration of this point. Mr. J. J. Connington, whose *Nemesis at Raynham Parva* (Gollancz. 7s. 6d.) is much the best of the detective novels proper, provides a perfectly adequate fictional detective. His Francia, it is true, is a White Slave trafficker, and not a German or Bolshevik spy (how jaded detective novelists will live to bless the Committee of the League of Nations for providing them with a good, new documented set of bogies!), but there is nothing obtrusively realist about him. Mr. Connington, realizing that his readers are never likely to meet a White Slave trafficker, does not attempt to make Francia into a real person, but only into what a White Slave trafficker *ought* to look like. He is *Villain: Type Argentine*, in the catalogue, and that is perfectly sufficient. More would have thrown the book hopelessly out of gear.

But turn now to Sir Cecil Walsh, in *The Agra Double*

*Murder* (Benn. 7s. 6d.), and read what a murderess really *was* like, and the letters which she wrote to her lover while she was poisoning her husband under his directions. The mind, on passing from the one world into the other, receives a terrific jar; and the reader's first reaction to the Agra story is: 'How ridiculous! how unlike life!'. If a detective novelist had created this woman, who first fell so passionately in love with an Eurasian doctor far beneath her in social standing, education, and personal qualities, then wrote letters to him in which 'Harry, *bucha* darling', and similar phrases occur cheek by jowl with complaints of the inadequacy of the powders which he is providing and a confident trust that God will eventually recognize their devotion and provide a happy future for them, and finally allowed her paramour to keep four hundred of these letters, endorsed with his name, in a box under *her* bed—if a novelist did these things, his readers would cry out in one body against his clumsy craftsmanship. But it did happen so; the letters were in the box and here they are set out in a book. And, as one reads, the fascination of this story, ugly and horrible as it is, begins to lay hold of one, and one begins to grasp the truth that real crimes, particularly crimes of murder, are fundamentally extraordinary and intricate problems of psychology, and that detective stories ('psychological' detectives notwithstanding) are and can be nothing of the kind. If a 'psychological' detective really understood the psychology of a real murderer, he would either rise and slay him with his naked hands—or he would be plunged into abysses of pity. He would certainly not behave like Sherlock Holmes. Sir Cecil's book is well done, and worth reading from this point of view.

I trust that *The Crime of Sybil Cresswell*, by E. F. Spence,

K. C. (*Benn. 7s. 6d.*), is also based on fact. If not, there is little excuse for it. It is not a detective novel, but the story of an exceedingly nasty woman who fell in love with an equally unattractive invertebrate of a man, murdered her husband, and then went mad. It is extremely badly written; the slabs of personal history (of the hero) with which the book opens are as dull as anything could be; and the dialogue, frankly, frightful. 'Tell me,' says Sybil Cresswell to the invertebrate, 'about your mistresses'. To which the invertebrate replies, 'Oh, Lady Cresswell, what a thing to ask!' If it is a write-up, it is clumsily done, and its author should study Mrs. Belloc Lowndes; if it is an imaginary crime, it is a very unattractive one.

*The Double Image*, by I. R. G. Hart (*Benn. 7s. 6d.*), is also not a detective story, in that the crime is concealed for a very small portion of the book. It is, in fact, rather a puzzle. The murderers, who are apparently intended to be objects of interest, are in the event both uninteresting and incredible; the one character which stands out as well and competently done is Anne, the mother-in-law of one of them, and her development is hampered by the exigencies of the plot. The suburban atmosphere is quite good; but it would have been better without the concomitant of murder. The author can write and observe pleasantly, but she (I fancy it is 'she') would have done better not to force two inconsistent plots into one book.

Returning now to the detective stories proper, I have already praised Mr. Connington. *Nemesis at Raynham Parva* is not so good as the *Case with Nine Solutions*; it is less architecturally austere, and Mr. Connington, in his generosity, has really supplied us with too many pointers to his last murder, as though the title of the book were not pointer enough. He should also try to avoid beginning

with a clumsy series of explanations in dialogue, which remind one of plays by playwrights with no sense of the stage. A novelist is always allowed a descriptive paragraph—why not use it, instead of making Sir Clinton and his sister tell each other things which they certainly know already. But it is a good book.

Mr. Alan Thomas, author of *The Death of Laurence Vining* (Benn. 7s. 6d.), had a very ingenious murder—so ingenious that it was a pity that he could not enshrine it in a rather better book. The trouble, unfortunately, is that Mr. Thomas cannot write at all, and all his dialogue and all his characters are distressingly commonplace. But his murder is so good that it is worth ploughing through the book to come to the solution. (I trust, however, that his statistics about the traffic in Hyde Park Tube Station are authentic.)

*The Mayfair Mystery*, by Henry Holt (Harrap. 7s. 6d.), is a 'standard novel' (see last month's 'Notes') of second verging to third grade. It keeps its criminal off the stage entirely, except for a couple of paragraphs, which is an easy, but an illegitimate way, of deluding the reader, and its working-out has no particular merit. It is better, however, than *The Gillespie Suicide Mystery*, by Leonard R. Gribble (Harrap. 7s. 6d.), which contains a detective who deduces a corpse's drunken habits from observing that the whisky decanter is nearly empty, whereas the siphon is two-thirds full! The same detective makes his discoveries by crawling around listening to the melodramatic conversation of crooks, and the book is abominably written.

*The Official History of the Gallipoli Campaign*, by Brig.-General C. F. Aspinall-Oglander (Vol. I.) (Heinemann. 15s.),



has been long awaited, and has fulfilled expectations. The drama of Gallipoli, the most vivid and spectacular event of the war, must always attract not only the student of war, but the wider public who demand the detail of human psychology displayed in connexion with large tragic events. Passages in Mr. Winston Churchill's volume, brilliant and fascinating as it is, have certainly been heightened by his imagination, and, moreover, the book suffers from being regarded as an *apologia pro vita sua*. It is satisfactory, at any rate, to be able to correct or confirm that work by this official history. The present volume extends to the second battle of Krithia. It is of absorbing interest, and the authorities are to be congratulated on allowing so frank and critical a description of the campaign to receive their sanction. No attempt has been made to white-wash any one, and the author tells his story, not only with that well-documented completeness that was to be expected, but with a literary skill not usual in works handicapped by the ominous word 'official'.

*The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan. Edited by James Blanton Wharey. (Oxford.) *John Bunyan in Relation to his Times*, by Edmund Arbuthnott Knox, D.D. (Longmans. 3s. 6d.) A critical text of the *Pilgrim's Progress* was long over-due, and Mr. Wharey's edition is excellent. He prefaces to his volume a short account of earlier attempts at critical editions, and shows how far short they fell of what he has attempted. The first serious effort was made by Southey in 1836, but he was handicapped by having access to no edition earlier than the eighth. Offor's great work (1847), in which 'every omission or alteration that the author made during his life is noted'—and generally in the text—

hardly amounts to textual criticism, while Dr. John Brown based his text (1907) on the eleventh edition, as being the last published in the author's life-time. But Mr. Wharey has proved that all the later editions are much less reliable than the early ones, especially the fourth and the seventh.

He has based his text on the fourth, and in his minute analysis of the problem he had to solve, he proves himself well fitted for his task.

Bishop Knox's contribution to Bunyan literature is a sketch, clear and well-balanced, despite a certain bias in favour of Puritanism, of the religious situation that produced Bunyan, and his reaction to it. He sketches the history of the Church of England from the accession of Elizabeth and the Act of Supremacy, and shows the steps by which the Puritans were, gradually, unwillingly, and only in part through their own fault, forced out of the State Church of England. They desired a greater reform in the English Church—'in their eyes it had taken over too much of Roman superstition, and was not sufficiently secure against a Roman reaction'. Catholics were still a majority in the country.

Bishop Knox blames the Stuarts, with their insistence on conformity, for the exodus of the Puritans, but none of the religious parties had a very developed idea of toleration. Even Cromwell, whose tolerance he commends, would not extend it to 'Papacy or Prelacy', a fairly important exception. For 'Religion in his silver slippers' has always commanded a large number of adherents. But to the see Puritan movement through Puritan eyes is an interesting experience, and Bishop Knox has drawn his picture vividly, and with reference to the modern situation of the Church of England.

Only one chapter deals with Bunyan as a man of letters, and it might well have been longer.

*Progress and Religion*, by Christopher Dawson. (Sheed & Ward. 10s. 6d.) A second book by Mr. Dawson is welcome. His first, *The Age of the Gods*, will remain for English readers the best available account of the movements, institutions, and ideas of primitive man, until the growth of knowledge makes a new synthesis necessary. It was masterly. His new book is partly a history and partly an analysis of the interactions of culture and religion from the earliest times to the present day. For the last two hundred years, belief in progress has tended, in Western Europe, to take the place of religion: in our generation belief in progress is itself failing. Then what comes next?

A culture is a way of life, originally determined in the main by environment. What would happen to an isolated culture in an area which underwent no climatic changes, we cannot tell. Conceivably, it would pass through a cycle of formation and decay,

Spenglerian fables true,  
If true, here only.

But there are no isolated cultures, and with them Spengler's hypothesis disappears. The vital moments in history are the ages of cultural contact. The impact of the Dorians on the Ægean world bore fruit in due course in Hellenic civilization: the penetration of Italian culture by Hellenistic ideas produced the Augustan civilization—which, and this is significant for our own age also, was felt by its greatest representatives to be thoroughly unsound. Virgil and Augustus would have agreed with Mr. Dawson that degeneration sets in when the way of

life fundamental to a stock changes, in particular when it is separated from the soil and its institutions cease to be in organic connexion with the habits which created it. The Augustan reforms were an attempt to revive a civilization by putting it back into its original habitat, and they failed because it was impossible to make the old way of life as attractive as the new. This is always the trouble. Augustus could stop ambitious generals from setting up as independent viceroys, but Virgil could not persuade the Roman cockney to work fourteen hours a day on an upland farm.

The primitive cultures correspond to the primitive religions in which the dominant conception is that of a satisfactory relation with the great sea of force, the *numen* of the Italians, the *yok* of the Tlingits. It is difficult to keep hold of this idea, when life is divorced from the simple and massive rhythms of the world, seed-time and harvest, day and night, and the business of life is atomized into the innumerable unconnected operations of trade and manufacture and administration. A developing civilization tends to be irreligious, because no one can feel it as a whole. At this point the historic faiths take the old conception and moralize it in the interests of stability, it may be, as in China, or deliverance, as in India. Alone among the great faiths—and this is the most striking part of Mr. Dawson's argument—Hebraism saw history as the field in which the *numen* is most clearly displayed. Progress is a prophetic conception, taken over by Christianity and in the long run tenable only on the Christian supposition that the true habitat of man is a spiritual community transcending environment. In Dean Inge's phrase, progress is the time-expression of divine goodness. I think, in working out his theme, Mr. Dawson raises

more questions than he answers, but I am not sure that that is not the greatest merit of his most suggestive book.

*Crystal Analysis*, by Sir William Bragg, K.B.E., D.Sc., F.R.S. (G. Bell & Sons Ltd. 12s.), is not intended for the reader to whom mathematics make no appeal. None the less, its publication marks a definite step on the road to that deeper understanding of life which keenly interests the thoughtful and is gradually transforming the terms in which everyday experience of the world around us has to be presented. After a description of the new methods of analysis, which X-rays have made possible and the results so far achieved, the Director of the Royal Institution sums up his book in a couple of sentences: 'We can lay bare the structure of the solid and examine it in relation to the properties of the solid phase. . . . Our new power is based upon two facts: the one that the arrangement of the atoms and molecules in a solid tends always to regularity and generally attains it in some degree, the other that the X-rays can detect this regularity and measure it.' Solid bodies are everywhere in evidence in the make-up of the world, and are intimately concerned in the processes of life. Given a knowledge of the design on which such solids are built, we are nearer understanding the structural forces, only adumbrated in liquids and gases, which in solids hold the atoms and molecules together—nearer understanding not only how the wheels of life go round, but why. Hence the tremendous importance of this unassuming little book in which Sir William Bragg describes and sums up the investigation in which he himself is the pioneer.

Some surprising results are mentioned. The crystals of most metals are built on the simplest plan, simpler even

than rocksalt. The greasiness of grease, like the lubricating quality of graphite, is due to a flake-like structure of their crystals which enables one layer of their tough flakes to slide easily over another, illustrating how a molecule's reactions to outside influences depend on its geometrical form, as, likewise, do its properties. The spiral structure of a quartz crystal, for example, is responsible for its optical activity. Crystallography is largely a research carried on in the hope that relationships between structure and properties will everywhere become patent and thus reveal the very origin of the properties themselves. The design of a crystal can be partially explained by the electrical properties of the electrons that go to build up an atom, but this still leaves much to be discovered about the why and the wherefore of the atom's individuality, and the fluctuations of its internal economy. X-ray examination has shown that the fibres of cotton and wool contain something that is crystalline—a pattern which reappears in many other substances of which cellulose is an important constituent, leading to the guess that further investigation will show that the cellulose structure itself is crystalline. Again, rubber, when stretched towards breaking-point, betrays crystallization which is absent before it is stretched and after it is relaxed again, showing that during stretching various crystals of more or less uniform size come successively into existence, each in itself a crystal of a definite structure, and that the process *is reversible*. Sir William Bragg's discovery of crystalline structure in organic substances is bringing him nearer a point where his researches may meet those of the biologist. The lattice patterns—the tapestry, to use his own simile—of various crystalline structures, are responsible for two periodicities or rhythms,

and, when periodicities coincide, 'enhancement' results. This is coming very close to some of the principles of 'growth' which biologists are trying to grasp. But the study of crystals has surprises in another direction. It has shown that certain definitive limits exist. For instance, the number of possible arrangements of cell-elements in crystalline structure is 230, no more, no less. How these geometrical arrangements are, in their lattice-spacing, related to those short wave-lengths of light known as X-rays, thus enabling the X-ray to be diffracted by the lattice of the crystal, and a radiogram of the lattice itself to be taken, must be read in Sir William Bragg's own words for its full fascination to be perceived. The ordinary reader, if he is interested in these things in themselves as well as in their wider implications, will not think twelve shillings thrown away, even if he has to skip the many pages of mathematical demonstration, contenting himself with the results set out in the author's always clear language. After all, the behaviour of atoms lends itself to just such a Proust-like intensity of penetrating gaze as does the emotional and intellectual behaviour of that assemblage of inter-dependent atoms, a human being! The crystal sometimes shows all the exhilarating unexpectedness of the man, and the man, maybe, is just as subject to principles of periodicity, attraction, repulsion, growth, and structurally-disciplined function, as is the crystal.

*The Most Ancient East: the Oriental Prelude to European Prehistory*, by V. Gordon Childe, B.Litt. (Kegan Paul. 15s.), is a book which comes at the right moment, and has been done in the right way by the first professor of Prehistoric Archæology in Edinburgh University. It is unnecessary to

emphasize to-day how greatly our understanding of history is enriched by a grounding of prehistory. Professor Childe demonstrates that the prehistory of the Ancient East is an indispensable prelude to a true appreciation of European prehistory, because the record of our Western prehistory is mainly the story of the imitation and adaptation of Oriental achievements. This he does by bringing into one readable and well-illustrated volume a summary of all that research has revealed of the great early civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Indus Valley, and comparing the three. He admits that it would be waste of time to try to build up an elaborate and coherent theory out of our present half-knowledge which excavation is revolutionizing every season. But the general reader and the archæological student will alike gain enormously from Professor Childe's synthetic review of the latest discoveries in these three fields, his authoritative analysis, and his clear demonstrations that by 3000 B.C. there were in the Nile Valley, the Indus Valley, and Mesopotamia, three civilizations which, though enjoying free and fruitful intercourse with each other, were all mature and individualized. He succeeds in shifting our attention from the narrow archæological discussion as to which owed most to the other, and which was originally the farthest advanced, and fixing it on the more pregnant facts of their maturity and their evident intercourse, with the result that we do realize how very youthful is our own Western civilization which weary-willies with short-focus views of history are apt to regard as entering upon a period of senile decay.

Professor Childe's book is written objectively from the view-point of a prehistorian and archæologist, but its conveniently marshalled facts provide food for reflection



on the ever-present problems of social organization and vitality. He brings out, for instance, how the Sumerian material civilization of Mesopotamia was well ahead of Egypt at the end of the fourth millenium B.C., but how, only a few centuries later, 'Egypt, entrenched at the head of the trade-routes, supplying indispensable commodities and blessed with internal peace, had prospered', whilst 'Sumer, her trade oppressed by exacting barbarian neighbours, rent by civil war, and deprived of Indian inspiration, could barely hold her own against the savagery that encompassed her, and lacked the energy for further progress save during the short intervals when a strong, but often alien, dynast could win for his city hegemony over all the rest'. For he shows how, when Sumer was so far ahead of Egypt, the Indus Valley civilization with which it lived in a species of commercial symbiosis, was still farther ahead than itself, but how the tenth and last city at Mohenjo-daro appears to have been overtaken by some shattering catastrophe shortly after 3000 B.C. He indicates clearly and convincingly how all three civilizations flourished in geographical districts which were much more favoured then, climatically, than they are to-day, for at that period North Europe was ice-bound, and the Arctic high pressure deflected the Atlantic rain-storms far south of their present track so that the Sahara, Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley all enjoyed a regular rainfall. These facts which scientific research has revealed about the climatic conditions and commercial intercourse enjoyed by these three civilizations throw a flood of light on the growth and decay of civilization and political states, and lend a far deeper interest to the discoveries of the last few years at Badari in the Egyptian desert, at Ur and Kish in Mesopotamia, and in Mohenjo-

dara and Harappa in Scinde, than the merely sensational value which the popular press has been so quick to exploit. *The Most Ancient East*—which is well ahead of Professor Childe's earlier book, *The Dawn of European Civilization*, in clarity of presentation—not only sets forth in an authoritative manner all these discoveries, but, by placing them against their geographical, climatological and historical background, provides a fascinating connected story that is bound to interest any reader who can be stirred by the romance of human motives and human behaviour in the mass. Only near the end does the author permit himself to speculate on the actual geographical cradle of civilization. He points out how the comparative study of Egyptian and Babylonian archæology has demonstrated the enormous antiquity of the craft of metallurgy, for these discoveries imply that there were distinct Egyptian and Babylonian schools as early as 4000 B.C.; and how further comparative study necessitates the assumption of other centres of metallurgy in Crete and Anatolia early in the fourth millenium. It is thus possible, to say the least, that the dawning cultures of Egypt, Mesopotamia and India were all three first fertilized from a fourth centre. On logical grounds Professor Childe, like Mr. O. G. S. Crawford, permits himself the expectation that such a fourth centre is more likely to be found in Southern Arabia than anywhere else. On equally logical grounds, climatic, geographic, anthropologic, the present reporter would be willing to give him sporting odds that future investigation will reveal that centre in Innermost Asia—somewhere north of the Himalaya, south of the present Siberian Steppe, west of the Chinese loëss plain, and east of the Oxus. Mr. Leakey would, no doubt, do the same for the now arid areas he is interested

in in Africa. So there are still, even in the history of civilization, gaps large enough to give plenty of elbow-room to adventurers in research.

Three novels, treating of an unfamiliar landscape and set of characters, deserve special notice. They are *A Virtuous Woman*, by Daphne Muir (Chatto. 7s. 6d.), *Mamba's Daughters*, by Du Bose Heyward (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.), and *Paper Houses*, by William Plomer (Hogarth Press. 7s. 6d.). The first deals with the adult life of a respectable Boer matron. It is a quietly remarkable little book, beautifully, though restrainedly, written. The personages described and the incidents recounted are arid and uneventful enough; but something more than the ordinary novelist's skill has gone to make them dramatic and memorable. *Mamba's Daughters*, on the other hand, can lay claim to no unusual literary graces. However, the story of three generations of negro women in the Southern States of America is simply and capably told; as subject-matter, it is extraordinarily interesting. Mr. William Plomer is a South African poet of some distinction, and *Paper Houses*, not strictly a novel, but a rather ramshackle collection of Japanese stories and impressions, reads as though he were uncertain whether prose or verse suited him best. His prose is vigorous, but often slatternly and down-at-heel. Again, it is chiefly his subject-matter, his sympathetic but severely unsentimental portrait of modern Japan, which makes his book worth reading.

*The Goodman of Paris, a Treatise on Moral and Domestic Economy*, translated by Eileen Power (Routledge. 12s. 6d.). The charm of this compilation, written about the year 1393

by an elderly French bourgeois for the guidance of a very young wife, is hard to exaggerate. For the scholar it contains a profusion of detail concerning medieval life; for the student of English literature it is henceforth an indispensable companion to the *Canterbury Tales*, as illustrating, by the identity of its parables, allusions and romances, the homogeneous trend of life on both sides of the Channel; for the gardener it suggests experiments, such as the simultaneous grafting of ten or twelve different trees on to an oak stump, which might reform the English countryside; for the cook, in this age of stereotyped courses, it is an encyclopedia of novelty; and for him that is no more than a reader it exhibits that urbane and generous outlook which each generation regards as the peculiar property of itself, and which it delights to find in the supposedly barbarous past. The author is avowedly writing to ensure his wife's success, not with himself, but with the husband she will choose when he is dead. Above all, in his opinion, a man looks for plenty of clean linen, no fleas, fires that smoke not, and well-covered breasts in his own home. Every grade of domestic duty, from chastity, or, failing it, forgiveness, to provision for the little dogs and birds in the chamber, is set forth, supplemented by detailed instructions for the management of the country estate and the proper use of Paris markets. To this programme Miss Power has added a witty and erudite introduction, in which the section on medieval gardening is unique. Among the illustrations are eight extremely beautiful plates borrowed from *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*.

*The Further Correspondence of Samuel Pepys* (Bell. 18s.) has been selected by Mr. J. R. Tanner from three manuscript

letter-books which contain a mass of hitherto unpublished letters, dealing for the most part with Pepys's official business at the Admiralty. They cover the very critical years of the Dutch wars, from 1662 to 1679, during which the fleet was continually hampered by insufficient supplies and incompetent management. What Pepys had to contend with at headquarters these letters show only too clearly, for they are not all 'official' documents, and to some of his correspondents Pepys could unlock his heart. It will come as a surprise to any one who is familiar only with the diarist—the man who had apparently infinite leisure for amusing himself—to read these letters of a very harassed and obviously over-worked civil servant. The subject-matter is for the most part naval, although there are occasional excursions into other contemporary affairs, and there is a good deal of detail that will only interest the specialist and the historian. Pepys was completely wrapped up in his work, and did not allow his private affairs to intrude into the office, and even the Fire of London was not sufficient to distract him from his methodical penning of reports and dispatches. Any one who is interested in Pepys's character, whether or not he is interested in the details of his official career, should examine this book, which disposes of the popular legend that Pepys was a frivolous and superficial man.

In the final list of Mr. Baring's novels, his latest, *The Coat Without Seam* (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.), will not, I suppose, stand very high. Yet it has the same virtues which endeared to us, for instance, *C*, *Cat's Cradle*, and *Daphne Adeane*. The treatment of the story is as skilful and as subdued. It is written with the same apparently haphazard grace. But here what might perhaps be called the

negative side of Mr. Baring's method seems to predominate. It has always been Mr. Baring's *forte* to express by significant silences what other novelists are accustomed wordily to over-emphasize. He infers a great deal while telling us very little. It may be a liaison is in progress. The protagonists meet; they shake hands; a glance is intercepted. Yet the reader is still doubtful; has he not been mistaken—are this pair lovers, after all? Is the novelist himself ignorant? Has his inbred delicacy prevented him ever putting the question in so blunt a form, even to his own characters? It is a method which offers immense advantages, but also (we now begin to see) has its corresponding defects. *The Coat Without Seam* is a story of failure; it is the history of a negative character negatively told. A young man throws away chance after chance; he makes inexcusable confusion of three consecutive love-affairs; a fourth is partially successful. Half-way through the book, we are so *sure* that next time he is bound to fail as badly as he failed this, that it needs all the compelling charm of Mr. Baring's habitual manner to hold our interest to the page. Besides, a thread of Catholic mythology, the legend of the Seamless Coat, has only the frailest and most artificial connexion with the business in hand, and Mr. Baring's last introduction of it, when the holy relic is used by a spy to signal enemy aircraft, is decidedly infelicitious. None the less, it is a book which you will find hard to put down. It may not be Mr. Baring at his best, but it is a second-best which many novelists might be glad to emulate.

*The Tragedy of John Ruskin, by Amabel Williams-Ellis.* (Cape. 12s. 6d.) The contemporary sources of pre-Raphaelite biography are characterized by a peculiar

combination of reticence and garrulity; private information and a highly sensitive faculty for putting two and two together are essential to any attempt at reconstruction. Mrs. Williams-Ellis's book is not conspicuous either for fineness of workmanship or critical discrimination, but great credit is due to her for having made a readable, plausible and, on the whole, sympathetic picture of a figure who suffered as much as any one of his time from partial obscurity and partial over-illumination. The tragedy of John Ruskin is a double one. There is the personal tragedy of a man too long sheltered and hampered by parental authority, unfortunate in love, and weak in health; there is also the tragedy of the public figure, the man of ideas, brilliantly engaged in an apparently unavailing crusade against his age. Mrs. Williams-Ellis is most happy in her purely biographical chapters. But in her criticism also, though it is confident and slightly immature, one must again be grateful for the sense of balance which has enabled her to maintain a just relation between the importance of his aesthetic and sociological interests.

*Adventures in the Revolution and under the Consulate* (Soldiers' Tales series), by Moreau de Jonnés, edited by Sir John Fortescue (*Peter Davies*. 7s. 6d.), is one of the most delightful volumes in a delightful series. Jonnés, as a narrator, almost rivals the incomparable Sergeant Bourgogne. But whereas Bourgogne took part in major operations, the most notable of these being, of course, the retreat from Moscow, Jonnés spent his life assisting at what Sir John Fortescue calls 'side-shows'. He fought with the United Irishmen against the Hanoverian mercenaries, in Brittany against the Chouans, at

Quiberon, in the West Indies, at the siege of Toulon. He was also present at the Battle of the First of June, 1794, against Admiral Lord Howe. His account of that last experience is the most vivid and spirited description of an eighteenth-century sea-fight I have ever read.

## CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editors of *Life and Letters*

May I briefly reply to the strictures passed by your critic on *The Early Life of Wilham III*?

This was written for that vast number of readers who do not care to search out obscure historical material for themselves, and to gather together knowledge available indeed, but only in the works of German and Dutch scholars; for this reason the list of authorities given was brief and the Dutch histories and contemporary memoirs your reviewer quotes omitted; obviously a complete, or partially complete, bibliography would have been out of place in a work of this pretension.

I am aware of John de Witt's dispatch to Beverningh, quoted by your reviewer, and of his efforts to resist the invasion of 1672, his patriotic speeches, etc., but he also held other language, as when he said 'If the French passed the Yssel, the Province of Holland must capitulate. . .'; some of his admirers aver that he declared Holland to be lost in order to hasten foreign aid; he submitted to opening negotiations with the conqueror, and the letter '*I cannot imagine any good result . . .*' might be taken as an expression of despair, and that De Groot acted with his full approbation; *such indeed was the popular opinion at the time*; why should Wicquefort, in close correspondence with De Groot, be wholly unreliable on this matter?

I am aware also that the motives of De Witt and Temple in making the Triple Alliance were to maintain the balance of power, etc., but can it be justly termed '*a strange blunder*' to call this 'a countermove in the name of Protestantism and liberty against this Roman Catholic aggression of an absolute monarchy'? The three countries which formed the alliance *were* Protestant and their opponent *was* Roman Catholic, and both the English and Dutch statesmen were impressed by the necessity of maintaining religious toleration for their faith, as well as their trade and possessions; the



decaying power of Spain was not regarded as any sort of a menace, and I do not think I have anywhere stated that Louis XIV's invasion of the Netherlands was due to '*religious bigotry*'. Even if my sentence was too arbitrary, your reviewer gives a quite misleading idea of the way I deal with this question.

I do not know why the Prince's three-hour speech must be called '*a picturesque legend*'—it is given in most contemporary histories, accounts, etc., of this period, and seems to have been generally accepted hitherto. Can your reviewer show where this is discounted?

There is an index and the Dutch names—of which there are so many ways of spelling—are given, as I explained in the Preface, in the most common English form.

The '*error*' in the date of the death of De Witt is difficult to trace as this date is not actually given. In the *Cambridge Modern History* it is given as August 4th—the actual date was August 20th, New Style, which makes my paragraph read correctly—'*the Prince being at the Hague on the 18th and receiving the news the evening of the 20th*'. (I have in

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my possession a medal struck to commemorate the death of the De Witts.) This seems a small detail to dispute, but the unfortunate *novelist*, when attempting biography, is aware of venturing on dangerous ground, and, amid the hail of inevitable (and expected) censures, does like to put up a defence where possible. As to a map, this was desired by the author, but it was found to be an added cost to production.

MARJORIE BOWEN

[I am unable to find in any of De Witt's letters the sentence quoted by Miss Bowen, 'If the French pass the Yssel, the Province of Holland must capitulate'. On the contrary, I find directions to Van Beverningh for withdrawing the army at once from the Yssel into Holland, in case the French crossed the Rhine into the Betume or Veluwe, and concentrating the defence on Holland. These directions are to be found in his letters to Van Beverningh on June 9th, 10th, and 12th. On June 10th he writes: 'I think, if the work cannot be carried on out there (i.e. on the Yssel) we must use all our energies to save ourselves, and that the other provinces, being in such a lamentable condition, can only be re-established by the conservation of Holland, and by the strength which subsequently may possibly be available from Holland for their deliverance. But if Holland also is left without defence and consequently is lost, there is obviously no help for any of the other provinces.'

As for the Triple Alliance, no trace of a religious motive is to be found in the correspondence either of De Witt or Temple. The question with them was simply the preservation of the balance of power.

I cannot find in any Dutch history the statement that William III's speech to the States-General lasted for three hours. Burnet, who is fond of romancing, does give a précis of it in the first volume of his *History of His Own Times*, but I cannot find any other account of it. In Sylvius, Wagenaar, and the Notes of Vivien and Hop taken at the meeting of the States-General, the Prince rejects the terms of peace in a few sharp words. He was never in the habit of making long speeches, even on important occasions. It would, however, be interesting to know how the legend arose.

I am sorry that I overlooked the index.—THE REVIEWER.]